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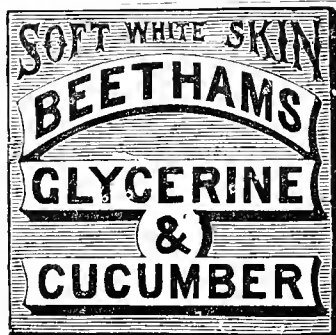
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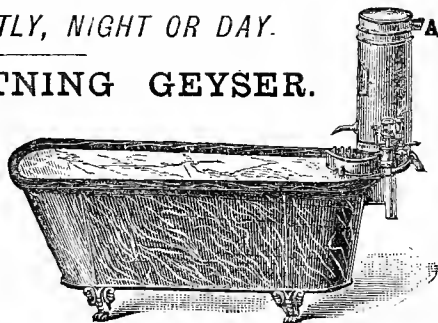
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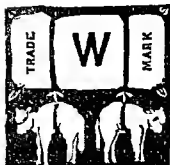
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A DETECTIVE'S TRIUMPHS.

A DETECTIVE'S TRIUMPHS

BY

DICK DONOVAN

*Author of "Tracked and Taken," "The Man from Manchester,"
"The Man Hunter," "Caught at Last," "Who Poisoned
Hetty Duncan?" etc.*



London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1891

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A DETECTIVE'S TRIUMPHS.

THE MYSTERY OF SURGEON-MAJOR PALMER.

ON that most sensational, or at any rate one of the most sensational of Derby days, what was known as 'Hermit's Derby,' a party of ladies and gentlemen, who, if not justly entitled to claim to walk in the exclusive ranks of the 'upper ten,' were not far removed from them, so far as their mode of life and habits were concerned, went down to the race-course from London in a splendidly-appointed drag, drawn by four magnificent bays that were tooled by young Lord Blank. (It is fitting that his Lordship's true name should not be given here, as he had nothing whatever to do with the extraordinary events I am about to narrate.)

Before dealing with these people it will not be out of place to briefly refer to that ever memorable Derby, which, to the astonishment of every one, to the ruin of many, and the despair and death of not a few, was won by a rank outsider called Hermit, owned by Mr. Chaplin. The odds on this horse were no less than 100 to 1, and if any one had ventured to predict before the race began that the horse would win he would have been voted insane. Nevertheless, after a wonderful and most exciting race, during which two or three persons died suddenly on the field from heart

disease, Hermit carried off the blue ribbon of that year by a bare neck only, his jockey being J. Daley, who got £3,000 for winning, while the owner of the horse netted no less a sum than £141,000. Not the least remarkable thing in connection with this remarkable race was, that the Duke of Hamilton had laid £180,000 to £6,000 against Hermit, but some little time before the Derby Day his grace was able, by means known to turfites, to declare the bet off, and so he saved his £180,000. When the winning horses were declared, the duke must have considered himself an exceedingly lucky man, for, though I do not know how much he may have won, it is a matter of history that he had been within an ace of bringing ruin on the ducal house. With these brief remarks I will now pass on to the ladies and gentlemen in the drag. The party, exclusive of the noble driver, numbered six. They were a Mr. Egerton Plunkett, about six-and-twenty years of age, whose father had recently died and left him a million of money, which had been made in the iron trade. But as fools and their money are soon parted, it seemed at this time as if young Plunkett had determined to get rid of his million with the greatest possible speed; for, though he had only been in possession two years, it was reported that he had already squandered a fourth of it. Then there was the Hon. Sidney Drinkwater, another young man, but who was said to live principally on the Jews, as he had 'good expectations.' His name, as far as he was personally concerned, was somewhat of a misnomer, as it was understood that he rarely took water, except by accident. He was a tall, lank, cadaverous-faced young gentleman, four-and-twenty years of age (who, it may be stated here, died of alcoholic poisoning

before he was thirty.) Next in order comes Mr. Algernon Mainwaring, a partner in an exceedingly wealthy firm of solicitors. The ladies were two sisters, the Misses Lilian Travers Aitkin and Mabel Susan Aitkin. Beyond saying that they were noted and *notorious* beauties, it is not necessary at the present to say more, as I shall have to deal with them further on.

The sixth person of the little party I have purposely left till the last. He was Surgeon-Major Palmer, retired. This gentleman was then about sixty years of age, but looked younger, being a wonderfully-well preserved man, with a splendid physique, and a pronounced military bearing. He had served his country with distinction in a medical capacity for something like thirty years, and had distinguished himself for his devotion and skill during the Crimean war, towards the end of which he was seriously wounded by a splinter of a shell that burst near him as he was attending to a wounded officer on the battle-field. Doctor Palmer had never married, owing—so the story ran—to his having been jilted in his youth, which caused him to register a vow that he would remain single all his life. He had, however, earned for himself a reputation for being ‘a thorough man about town,’ and in spite of his being a gentleman by birth and education, he was ostracised in certain classes of society owing to some glaring scandals with which his name had been mixed up. Nevertheless, he was a man whose company was courted, for he had a singularly winning manner with him, was very handsome, a brilliant *raconteur*, generous to a fault, and was never known to speak ill of any one, even of those people whom he knew to be his enemies. Such a man was sure to be in great request, especially when, added

to his other attractions, he was the fortunate possessor of ten thousand a-year, which he had inherited from an uncle.

Surgeon-Major Palmer was a Bohemian by instinct and inclination. He loved a free and unconventional life; and at his charming house at Chelsea some very remarkable company could be met with.

In order to minister to their wants at the Derby the party had taken three men-servants with them, two being the butler and footman of Lord Blank, and the third a servant of Dr. Palmer's. His name was Walter Joyce. He was slightly under forty years of age, and was a fine, tall, handsome fellow. He had been a soldier, and had seen service in the Crimea. His position was that of a valet, and he had been with his master about six months.

The ladies and gentlemen I have enumerated were the guests of Lord Blank, he having undertaken to drive them down to the course in his sumptuous drag. They were a merry party—made merrier by the fact that they all won some money by bets. In the way or delicacies that would minister to the carnal appetite nothing seemed to have been forgotten, and the luncheon was of a very *recherché* description, while the gentlemen vied with each other as to which could be the most gallant and attentive to the two beautiful young women who were their companions. Presumably life sat very lightly on each member of that little company. No thoughts of a dark to-morrow or a tortuous future entered into their minds. The mighty sorrow of the world had apparently passed them by. They revelled in the luxury that wealth can purchase, and they laughed and were joyful. No doubt, had it been possible for some Asmodeus to

have enabled an outsider to peer in each heart that seemed to beat so joyously, he would have seen that not one was without its black speck—not one without its gnawing worm. For human life—at any rate such a life as these people led—must ever be conventional, and more or less hypocritical.

After the great event of the day was over the party returned to town, which they reached about six o'clock. Lord Blank deposited his guests at the door of Surgeon-Major Palmer's house. Then he left them with his two servants, a prior engagement necessitating his going away, and so he passes out of this story. The others were to dine at Dr. Palmer's house, which I must now describe to some extent. It was a large, old-fashioned house, standing in about an acre of ground. The garden was walled in, but in the boundary wall at the bottom was a door which gave access to a small paddock of about three-quarters of an acre, which the doctor utilised for his horses; and it is important to state here, as it has a considerable bearing on what follows, that at this particular time a very favourite horse of the doctor's, which he called Jerry, and which had been out of health, had been put to graze in the paddock, and was there on the Hermit Derby night.* The man was greatly attached to the horse, and the horse to him, and, whatever Surgeon-Major Palmer's faults were, he bore the character of having a great love for all dumb animals. The dinner party consisted of, besides the doctor, the Hon. Sidney Drinkwater, Mr. Egerton Plunkett, Mr. Algernon Mainwaring, Lilian and Mabel Aitkin, and a Mr. Roland, a neighbour, who 'dropped in.' The house,

* The Doctor's house was pulled down years ago, and the land built upon, several smaller houses now covering the site.

which was a commodious one, was luxuriously furnished, and provided with everything that taste could suggest and money buy. There were rare pictures, bronzes, articles of vertu, bric-a-brac, and a unique collection of Indian curiosities which the doctor had gathered in India.

The household was presided over by a lady house-keeper, a Mrs. Challoner, the widow of an army officer, who had been in the doctor's service for some years. And besides the valet, Walter Joyce, already mentioned, there were a butler, a cook, a scullerymaid, three chambermaids, two parlourmaids, a coachman, two grooms, and a page-boy.

It will thus be seen that the doctor kept up a very considerable establishment, but he also kept a great deal of company. Indeed it was very seldom that there was not company in the house; and as the doctor was very fond of the fleshpots of Egypt, he must have made a pretty big hole every year in his income. It was but natural, perhaps, that this particular convivial gathering should be marked by a trifle more freedom and a little more boisterousness than usually characterised even the doctor's little dinners, which were noted for their *recherché* character and freedom from restraint. 'This is Liberty Hall, ladies and gentlemen, and you will do as you like,' the host was fond of saying. But on this night there was a memorable Derby to commemorate, and some men and women are fond of the slightest excuse for a little extra indulgence. One thing was certain, that the doctor's guests needed good appetites and an all but unlimited capacity for imbibing. Dr. Palmer's appetite was said to be prodigious, and he liked his friends to eat and drink heartily. To dine with the

doctor was considered a treat, for he was an epicure, and his wines could not be surpassed.

When the dinner was over the ladies and gentlemen retired to the elegantly-appointed smoking-room, where they played cards for a couple of hours. After that they adjourned to the drawing-room, and music was indulged in, and at midnight they went down to a supper of lobster-salad and champagne.

The reader who has followed me thus far will, no doubt, say that by this time these people must have been in a condition when they could no longer be said to be responsible for their actions. And, as a matter of fact, they were all more or less under the influence of the wine they had taken. It had at first been arranged that the ladies were to be escorted home—they lived near Regent's Park—and the doctor had given orders that the carriage was to be ready, but this order was countermanded, and it was decided to make a night of it; but the Hon. Sidney Drinkwater became ill, and at his own urgent request was driven home in the doctor's dog-cart. It was arranged that all the others were to sleep in the doctor's house, with the exception of Mr. Roland, who lived within a couple of hundred yards.

When the Hon. Drinkwater had departed, such of the servants who had remained up were told to go to bed, including Walter Joyce, the valet. The butler was the last to retire, as he had to replenish certain supplies which had been exhausted. This duty accomplished he too went to bed, the doctor undertaking to see the house all secure and the gas put out. It would appear that the doctor and his guests resorted to cards as a means of enjoying themselves, and soon after two o'clock the two ladies begged to be allowed to retire,

and with some reluctance the doctor gave them permission to go, as they pleaded that they were quite knocked up; and being a soldier and a gentleman he could not resist their appeal, so he himself showed them to the room they were to occupy. This was a very handsomely-furnished chamber in the front of the house, his own bed-room being on the opposite side of the corridor. In about ten minutes he rejoined his guests, and two or three more rubbers of whist were played, but it is in evidence that the gentlemen had by this time got into a state when most things had ceased to interest them. Some exception, however, was to be made in the doctor's favour, for it would seem that there was a stage beyond which he never went, and it was positively asserted that he never so far forgot himself as to be unable to account for his actions.

As the orange, so to speak, had been sucked dry for that night, or rather morning, the host conducted Mr. Plunkett and Mr. Mainwaring to their rooms, and then he saw Mr. Roland home, and having performed this service he returned to his house. That was beyond all doubt, because the policeman on the beat, and to whom he was well known, happened to be at the gate, and the doctor chatted with him for some minutes, the subject of conversation being the remarkable circumstance of a rank outsider winning the Derby. Wishing the man good night, the doctor entered his house, and the policeman heard him lock and chain the door. It was then after four o'clock, but still quite dark, with rain threatening and a very strong wind blowing.

The rest of the night wore itself away, and the doctor's household—that is, the servant part of it—

rose somewhat later than usual, for they knew that, after the preceding night's carouse, their master and his friends were not likely to put in a very early appearance. Soon after nine o'clock Mrs. Challoner, the housekeeper, took some tea up to the ladies. They were asleep when she first knocked at the door, but the knocking awakened them and the door was opened; and now a very remarkable incident has to be recorded. In the course of conversation with the housekeeper Lilian Aitkin said—

‘Oh, Mrs. Challoner, do you know I’ve had such a horrid dream. I dreamt that Dr. Palmer was dead, and I woke up in a fright and could have sworn that I heard the report of a gun. Then I went to sleep and actually dreamt the same thing again.’

Mrs. Challoner smiled, and remarked that dreams were not to be relied upon, and that she had no doubt, when the ladies went down to breakfast, the Doctor would be there to meet them radiant as ever, for he seemed to be endowed with a cast-iron constitution, and nothing upset him.

An hour or so later, when the ladies did go downstairs, they proved Mrs. Challoner to be incorrect, for the Doctor was not there to meet them. The butler said that he would send Walter Joyce to call the master, but the ladies begged that he would not do so yet, for they were quite sure the Doctor must be very much fatigued, and they preferred that he should be allowed to sleep for some time longer. At eleven o'clock Mr. Mainwaring put in an appearance, and to him Lilian related her dream on his asking her and her sister how they slept, and he being an unsentimental man laughed and told her dreams were to be interpreted contrariwise. A quarter of an

hour later Mr. Plunkett joined the party in the breakfast-room, and as the host had not then appeared the butler was requested to send up to his room.

Ten minutes later the butler rushed in with the startling information that not only was the Doctor not in his room, but his bed had not been slept in, and he could not be found in any other part of his house. Such an effect had this announcement on Lilian Aitkin, as she connected it with her dream, that straightway she fainted, and so added to the confusion into which the guests were thrown. The housekeeper was summoned and instructed to give attention to the lady, and then Mr. Mainwaring, being a lawyer and a practical man, began to question the servants as to what likelihood there was of their master having gone out after his guests had retired, and they answered that they did not think it at all likely. Moreover, the large hall door and the back doors were all securely bolted and chained. That would not have been the case with the hall door if the master had gone out.

At first no uneasiness was felt by the guests, and Mr. Mainwaring despatched a message to Mr. Roland, asking that gentleman to come round, and when he arrived he told them what they had not known—that the Doctor had taken him home, and left him at his doorstep, and he knew nothing of the Doctor's movements after that. Now, if the servants were correct in what they stated—and there was no reason to believe they were not—namely, that the doors were bolted and chained, it was obvious that the Doctor must have re-entered his house; and if that was so, where could he have gone to? But in a little while the scullerymaid, who was the first to come down

that morning, asserted positively that a back door leading out of the scullery into the back garden was only on the latch, and was not locked at all, which astonished her very much, for she knew that the master was very particular about the doors, as the house had been twice robbed, and burglaries were not infrequent in the neighbourhood. Added to this was a statement by the old gardener, who said that he too was surprised to find the wall door that led into the paddock standing open. Now he was aware, as well as all the servants were, that since Jerry, the horse, had been in the paddock, the Doctor often went out the last thing at night to see that Jerry was all right, and to give him an apple or a carrot; but he was always very careful about closing the paddock door to prevent the horse getting into the garden. The inference now was that, after the Doctor had returned from seeing Mr. Roland home, he entered his house by the hall door, and having securely fastened that, had gone out at the back to visit Jerry. That was feasible enough, of course, but if he had gone out, why had he not come back? That was precisely where the mystery began! It was clear that the Doctor had disappeared, but how and why? It was equally clear he had not been in his bed, for it was exactly as the chambermaid had left it, and the gas was still burning in the room. The paddock was examined, but the missing man was not there. It did not apparently require much examination, for it was simply an oblong field, with two poplar trees at the end; a very much decayed oak tree; a wooden shed for the horse on one side, and a dung heap and a liquid manure pit. One side of the field was bounded by the garden of another house, from which

it was separated by a tarred wooden fence and a quick-set hedge. At the bottom it was joined by another garden, but here again was a compact hedge, and the other side was protected by a high brick wall that shut it off from a side thoroughfare.

When all these things were considered, something like a feeling of uneasiness seized upon the little company, and they asked each other what could possibly have become of the Doctor. There was a door leading out of the garden into the thoroughfare just mentioned, but this was only used by the gardener, and the Doctor had not a key. Moreover, the door was locked, and from the thick cobwebs in the corners and the dirty and rusty condition of the lock it was certain that the door had not been opened for a considerable time. At one side of the house and at the back part were the stables and stableyard, and on the other side the front garden was separated from the back by a light trellis work overgrown with ivy. There was a door in the trellis work, but it was also locked. At this door a huge Newfoundland dog was kept chained up, and no one had heard the dog bark in the night. Of course he would not have barked if his master had gone to him, but he would have made himself heard unmistakably if a stranger had been moving about the premises.

A consideration of all these points only served to deepen the mystery, for mystery it certainly was. Amongst the servants who had crowded into the breakfast-room and the guests uneasiness was very apparent, and uppermost, no doubt, in each mind was the unspoken question, 'Has anything dreadful happened to the Doctor?'

Miss Lilian Aitkin—whose dream by this time was

known to the servants, Mrs. Challoner having told them—gave way to uncontrollable grief, for she was deeply impressed with the dream, which she had twice dreamt, and she expressed strong fear that something terrible had happened. The rest, however, were disposed not to take that view at the time, although they knew that, his Bohemianism notwithstanding, the Doctor was not erratic, nor given to wandering off without leaving word where he was going to.

From the evidence that Mr. Mainwaring had gathered up so far, it seemed pretty certain, if the servants were to be believed, that the master had entered the house again after leaving Mr. Roland. So much was certain, because the hall door was bolted inside, and a heavy chain that fastened right across it was in its place, according to the statement of the servant. But, having secured that door, he went out at the back, using the scullery doorway for his exit; and his object, on the face of it, was to visit Jerry and see that he was all right. Having gone into the paddock, however, it seemed as if he had not returned, because the communicating door between the garden and the paddock was, as the gardener declared, standing open. In company with the gardener, coachman, stableman, butler—in fact, all the men folk—Mr. Mainwaring went into the paddock again with a view to examining the hedges to see if there was any trace of the Doctor having gone through. It was not possible for him to have got over the wall; it was too high, unless he had used a ladder, and he would hardly have carried the ladder off with him. In the bottom hedge there was observed a slight, very slight, gap, through which a man might have squeezed; but the hedge being a prickly thorn

hedge, a person so squeezing through must have suffered very considerably; moreover, it was in the highest degree probable that he would have left shreds of his clothing on the thorns; but, though the lawyer examined this part of the hedge with the greatest care, even using a powerful reading glass from the Doctor's study for the purpose, there was not the slightest trace of anyone having gone through. Besides, anyone forcing himself through must necessarily have broken some of the twigs, but not a twig was broken.

After this examination it was felt that the mystery was deepening, and not a soul there was capable, or at any rate, willing to suggest even a possible hypothesis for the Doctor's disappearance. It was only too painfully evident that he had disappeared, but how or why not a living soul there could tell.

Naturally, there was a reluctance on the part of his friends no less than on the part of his servants, to make the matter public; for if Lilian Aitkin is left out there was no one present who at that stage of the proceedings suspected mischief. The disappearance might be a freak on the Doctor's part; but what puzzled them was how he could have got away. Miss Aitkin indulged in all sorts of gloomy forebodings, for she was a nervous and hysterically-inclined young woman, and her dream had given her a shock, and she expressed a firm conviction that the Doctor was dead.

The instability of human joy and light-heartedness was strikingly illustrated by these people. A few hours before they were full of a happy carelessness; they might have been the personification of perfect delight so far as they could be judged externally,

but now grave anxiety was apparent in every face, and a fear, shadowy and vague at first, did begin to take possession of them when hours passed, and they were as far off as ever from answering the problem. It is, perhaps, needless to say that the house, as well as the grounds, was thoroughly searched, but without yielding the slightest clue, and at last, when the fear was becoming more substantial, Mr. Mainwaring told his companions that he thought that they ought not to delay any longer communicating with the police; and as this was voted the proper thing to do, the lawyer took the task upon himself, and went out for that purpose.

Within two hours of Mr. Mainwaring appealing to the police, I was sent for, he having been recommended to put the case in my hands. He gave me all the details of the doctor's movements during the past twenty-fours in a perfectly frank manner. And those details form the story which I have narrated in the foregoing pages. Being a lawyer, and used to systematising facts and incidents, he was clear in his statements, and placed all the incidents in proper sequence, so that everything likely to have any bearing on the case might be before me. Mr. Mainwaring did not attempt to disguise that they were all more or less under the influence of the wine they had imbibed the previous day and night. But his own opinion was, the doctor was not much, if any, the worse. That this was correct was borne out by the testimony of the policeman, who while on duty had seen Surgeon Palmer, and conversed with him a few minutes previous to his entering his house. That he did enter the house and secure the door the man was positive about, and that the door was secured in the

morning all right was vouched for by the servant who had come down first.

At this stage of the case it did not seem that any of the friends or servants, except Miss Lilian Aitkin, seriously thought that any fatal calamity had happened to the Doctor.

‘The fact is,’ said Mainwaring, ‘although he could stand a lot of drink without showing it, it affected his brain very much, and when alcoholised he was in the habit of doing erratic and idiotic things. Now what I think is this: Seized with some sudden and unaccountable desire to wander about after he got into the house, or after he went into the paddock to see the horse, he managed to get away somehow or other, and has fallen perhaps into bad hands; that is, got into a house where he is being detained. He may even have been drugged, for he wore a good deal of jewellery, and was seldom without a considerable sum of money in his pocket. Having an idea that I am correct in my theory, I should like the affair kept as quiet as possible so as to avoid scandal.’

‘Well,’ I answered, ‘what you state is feasible, although it’s antagonistic to your first statement, that it was not possible for him to have got out of the paddock without leaving some indications behind as to how he had gone.’

‘True, I did say so; but if he didn’t leave the paddock, where the deuce is he?’

Of course this line of argument showed that, lawyer though he was, Mr. Mainwaring was at his wit’s end for a reasonable theory—in short, was absolutely mystified.

As I was assured that every hole and corner of the house had been subjected to a rigid examination, I did not deem it necessary to go over the premises again

at that moment. And having heard a narration of Miss Lilian Aitkin's dream—to which, let me say here, I attached not the slightest importance—I proceeded to the paddock in company with the lawyer and several of the servants, including the coachman, stablemen, and the gardener. After a full half hour's critical examination of the place, I came to the conclusion that the Doctor could not have escaped that way. There was not the slightest gap in the formidable hedge through which a man could have passed without leaving some trace behind—that is to say, he would have required to have exerted so much force in order to squeeze his body through that many of the twigs and stems must necessarily have been broken. Now, the paddock itself had no hole or corner where a man could have concealed himself. There was a small hay stack in one corner and a shed in the other, but they, of course, need not be taken into account. Yes, there was one place, but it could only have hidden a dead man's body. This place was the liquid manure pit. It was about twelve feet square, almost flush with the ground, but a wooden combing running all round to prevent the edges of the pit falling in, and there was a wooden pump on one side for the purpose of pumping the liquid up, which was then used for the garden. Looking at this pit for some moments I asked—

‘How deep is that pit?’

My question was like a bombshell, for it at once suggested a dreadful possibility, and I saw that nearly every one present betrayed alarm.

‘My God!’ exclaimed Mainwaring, ‘you don’t think that he has thrown himself in there?’

‘I asked a question,’ I said; ‘it is not for me to hazard an opinion. How deep is the pit?’

The gardener here spoke up and answered me.

‘It’s about three-and-a-half feet, sir.’

I confess that when I heard that I had a sort of instinctive feeling that that horrible place would show us how the Doctor had disappeared. For, if he was not in there, how could he have gone away and left no trace behind unless he had been spirited away?

‘Have you a pole or a pitchfork?’ I inquired of the gardener.

‘Oh, yes,’ and he went off to the stable.

The little group of spectators became suddenly silent and scared, after the manner of people who know that they are about to hear some dreadful revelation. My own feeling in the matter was this—and let it be understood that my thoughts were naturally bred out of what I had been told. All the people were utter strangers to me. I had never heard of Surgeon-Major Palmer in my life; but, according to the details, as I had gathered them, this gentleman, being wealthy and an idler, and fond of free-living, had been to the Derby, bent on having what he would, no doubt, have called a day’s enjoyment. At night he entertained his friends at his house, and they all seemed to have drank, ‘not wisely, but too well.’ The surgeon, being able to stand more than the others, saw a friend home at an early hour in the morning; then returned to his house, and in all probability he may have refreshed himself again from the too seductive decanter. After that, being fond of his animals, he had gone out to see his invalid horse; and after that—what? With the other facts before one, did it not seem easy to fill in the sequel? Some sudden aberration of intellect *might* have led him to commit suicide; but the more likely theory was that, lacking physical steadiness,

and possibly being somewhat in a mental haze, he had stumbled and met his fate in that horrible cesspool. Surely, nine hundred and ninety men out of every thousand would have constructed just such a theory as that in the absence of a tittle of evidence that the Doctor had got out of the paddock, and, as I looked at the melancholy horse standing limp and scared-like under the shed, I thought to myself, 'That poor beast knows all about it. I read the story in his mournful eyes, and had he but the gift of speech he would say, 'Yes, you are quite right; it is even as you think.'

As will be seen directly, only one part of my theory was correct.

In a few minutes the gardener returned with a pitchfork, and, taking this from him, I began to sound the manure pit, and in a few moments I turned to the scared and eager spectators who were crowding round, and said—

'The gentleman is in here.'

The effect of this announcement was to cause them all to start back in horror, and one of the female servants fell with a shriek to the ground and fainted. I had with the pitchfork touched a soft, yielding something in the turbid mass, and that something I had not a doubt was a human body. The fainting woman was carried into the house, and then we made a grapnel of some large iron hooks fastened to two lengths of cord, and with this apparatus we fished Surgeon-Major Palmer from the horrible pit.

The recovery of his body, of course, caused a sensation amongst those who, in a sort of bewildered and fascinated way, were looking on. It was but natural that when we hauled the body out I should think that

the theory I had constructed was the correct one, for I had no means of seeing then that the mystery was only beginning.

It can readily be surmised that the condition the poor gentleman was in after being soaked in that filthy liquid prevented our seeing the true state of matters. I had a large horse-cloth brought from the stable, and in this we placed the body, and so carried it into the scullery, and when I had intimated that the corpse should be stripped of the clothing and washed and the coroner notified, I considered my share in the ghastly business was over. But, as a matter of fact, it was only then commencing.

The servants, of course, were much cut up and horrified, for the 'master' was greatly beloved by those who served him; for he was not only a very considerate master and a humane one, but an unusually kind one to his servants, and so there was much weeping and wailing at the sight of the poor man lying there enveloped in slimy filth, and stone dead. One of the gardeners had already seized a sponge, and, dipping it in water, had begun to sponge the face, when suddenly he started back with the exclamation—

'Good God! look here, he's got a hole in his head!'

I was in the very act of leaving the scullery when this was said, but, turning back, I stooped down, and saw on the forehead near the right temple a blue, jagged wound, which, from its appearance, left no doubt on my mind was a bullet wound. I had seen many bullet wounds in my time, and was not likely to be deceived.

Rising to my feet I said—

'This puts another aspect on the matter. Please send for the nearest medical man, and leave the body

precisely as it is. Don't touch it any more until it has been seen by a surgeon.'

I now deemed it my duty to remain there, although the conclusion I came to was that it was a case of suicide, and when Mr. Mainwaring muttered to me, 'This is an awful bit of business,' I answered, 'Yes, the poor man has evidently killed himself.'

'I should rather be disposed to say somebody else has killed him,' Mainwaring remarked. 'Why, he seemed to me the very last man in the world to do such a deed as that. He enjoyed life. He was of a most cheerful disposition; had plenty of money, and, as far as one could judge, not a care in the world.'

'Ah!' I answered, 'every man leads a life within his life. Unless you can know the secret workings of a man's heart you can never know whether he is truly happy or not. Besides, the brain often plays sudden tricks with us, and there may come a time when a sudden pang of remorse for something done renders a man mad for a moment, but in that moment he realises the falseness of life's glitter, and rushes into the unknown.'

'There is truth in what you say,' replied Mainwaring, 'but I'll be hanged if I can think that of Palmer. He was not only a philosopher, but endowed with a powerful mind.'

'Well, we shall see,' I returned. 'You knew him, and I didn't; but I think we shall find it is a case of suicide.'

In the course of another few minutes the doctor arrived, and, stooping down, he made a cursory examination of the wound, and immediately pronounced it a bullet-hole. He thereupon ordered the body to be stripped and washed immediately, and

while preparations were being made for carrying out these instructions I returned to the paddock to look for the weapon that had made the hole, and I took the gardener with me. My own impression was the weapon would be found in the manure pit. For some strange reason, as it seemed then, Dr. Palmer had shot himself at the edge of the pit, and when he fell the pistol—for, presumably, it was a pistol—fell with him. So we set to work at once to pump the liquid out; but while this was being done I used the drags, though without any result. And after we had been at work half an hour, the butler came running out in a very excited state, and exclaimed breathlessly—

‘Mr. Donovan, Mr. Donovan, the doctor wants you immediately!’

I returned to the house at once. The body had been removed to a little ante-room, whither I was conducted. I found the doctor, Mr. Mainwaring, and Mr. Plunkett there, and when I had entered the doctor closed the door and said, quietly and gravely—

‘Mr. Donovan, this is a case of murder.’

‘Murder!’ I echoed.

‘Yes. I find on examination that there is a very deep puncture, evidently a stab, in the back under the left shoulder-blade, and, as far as I can judge from the direction of the wound, I should say the heart must have been punctured. Now, although it would have been easy enough for a man to have shot himself in the forehead as we find this man shot, it would be an utter impossibility for him to stab himself in the back. I have probed for the bullet, but cannot find it. It is probably imbedded deep in the base of the skull. I should say without hesitation that either wound would produce almost, if not absolutely, instantaneous death,

but it is clearly impossible for me to determine now whether the Doctor was shot first or stabbed first.'

I will not hesitate to say that this announcement caused me a shock, because it seemed to me at first so clearly a case of suicide, that murder had not entered into my thoughts. But from what the doctor said, there could not be a shadow of a doubt that Surgeon-Major Palmer had been foully murdered. And now came the solemn and serious question—'By whom? Who had done this horrible deed? And why had he done it?'

From the careful examination we had already made of the paddock, we proved pretty conclusively that there was no break in the hedge to show that a man had either entered or left. But, returning once more to the place, I began a new inspection, and as I noticed the old horse, which was still standing mournfully under his shed, I could not help the reflection—'Poor beast! your eyes must have seen this strange deed—must have seen your poor master foully done to death; but nature seals your mouth, and you cannot describe the murderer.'

It might only have been fancy on my part, but it certainly did seem to me that the animal was sorrowing and grieving.

The inspection I now made only served to confirm the conclusion I had come to at first, which was that nobody had got over the hedge; and to have got over the wall a ladder was necessary, though a daring and determined man might have got over by other means. That is, he might have had a rope with a large sharp hook at the end. He could have thrown this hook to the top of the wall until it caught. Then he could have pulled himself up by the rope, and lowered him-

self down again on the other side by the same arrangement. But given that this was the means employed, I should have expected to find traces of the man's boots on the surface of the wall. I say 'a man,' because all the circumstances were antagonistic to the idea that a woman had done the deed. As far as mere possibilities went, a woman might have done it, but the probabilities were all against it, though it did occur to me that a woman might, and very likely ⁷ was the cause.

Although I subjected the wall to the keenest search, I could not detect the slightest sign that a man with boots on had climbed up it. A man without boots on might have done so. Supposing, for instance, the murderer had prepared all his plans beforehand, he, in all likelihood, came barefooted, and in that case his feet would not have marked the wall. I next got a ladder and, mounting to the top of the wall, examined it for indications of a hook or grapnel having been employed, but I could see nothing that warranted me coming to the conclusion that such a means of entrance to or egress from the paddock had been used.

Most certainly, as appearances went then, the affair was a very complicated puzzle, and it was necessary to define some reasonable hypothesis to account for the motive of the murder. That motive was not robbery. That was placed beyond doubt by all the property on Dr. Palmer's body being intact—his rings, a diamond scarf-pin, his massive and very valuable gold chronometer and chain, and his money, £20 being found in his pocket. The idea of robbery, therefore, had to be put on one side. And that being so, the next likeliest motive was revenge, and till I saw reason to change my views I determined to look upon revenge as the

actuating cause which had led to the dark deed being committed. As a logical sequence of this view, it followed that the person guilty of the deed must have been pretty well acquainted with the Doctor's habits. He must have known that he was in the habit of going to look at his sick horse the last thing before retiring. And on the night of the crime he knew, no doubt, that his victim was making merry—that his victim's guests were in a state when they would probably all sleep soundly. And so the murderer lay concealed in the paddock during the solemn hours of the night, and with no mortal eye, save that of the poor old horse, to witness the foul deed, he slew the unfortunate man. All these points, if in any way correct, pointed to the murderer as being one of the household of that night. Either one of the guests or one of the servants. I need scarcely say I kept this thought strictly to myself.

Not the least remarkable circumstance in connection with this mystery was Lilian Aitkin's dream. That she did so dream seemed evident, because she had told Mrs. Challoner before it was known that the Doctor had not slept in his bed, and Mrs. Challoner had told the other servants. Necessarily I asked myself if this dream was the effect of foreknowledge, or the result of causes that could not be determined by ordinary laws? But if it was the effect of foreknowledge, the girl must have been worse than a fool to tell her dream, as it was calculated to place her in a somewhat unenviable position. I inclined to the belief that there was no foreknowledge, because, had Lilian known that the murder was to be committed, she surely would never have been so weak-brained as to say she had dreamed about it, for what possible

purpose was there to serve in so doing? Nevertheless, I determined to look into the history of pretty Lilian Aitkin.

In due time the manure-pit was pumped dry, and then we carefully searched the place for the weapons with which the murder had been committed; but the search was without result. We could find nothing, and I turned my attention then to trying to discover the exact spot where the crime was perpetrated, and on my hands and knees I began a careful scrutiny of the grass, deeming it probable that some of the blades would show traces of blood, for the doctor stated that from both wounds there would be a large flow of blood. After a time my search was rewarded. I found what were unmistakably blood-stains on the grass. I traced these stains to the haystack of which I have made mention. There was a wooden roof over this hay. The roof was supported by a wooden prop at each corner. I found that some of the loose hay on the ground had been drenched with blood. Here, then, was the spot where the deed had been done, and it was easy to suppose that the murderer lurked behind the haystack, that his victim went to the stack to get some hay for the horse, that he was then shot and fell on his face, but, not being dead, or to make doubly sure of the fiendish work being complete, the victim was stabbed in the back as he lay. His body was then dragged to the manure-pit and cast in.

So far, the action of the tragedy seemed clear enough. And now it was important that the weapons should be discovered, for they might afford an unerring clue to the perpetrator of the deed. To this end the paddock was searched and searched again. The hay was turned over; possible and

impossible hiding places were examined ; the adjoining gardens were also searched under the idea that the criminal might have hurled the things away after the crime was done. But our labour was all in vain. Nothing was found, and I next turned my attention to the interior of the house. The servants, as well as the gentlemen guests who still remained, anxious to do what they could, rendered valuable aid, and our search of the house was as thorough as the search of the gardens and the paddock had been, but the result was the same. In the Doctor's bed-room were three or four revolvers, but it was proved that they had not been used for a long time. There were also hung on the wall an Indian lance, a cavalry sword, a Turkish bayonet, and an Italian dagger with a jewelled handle, and a long, sharp blade. These things were subjected to a rigid examination with a powerful glass. But the rust of ages was on them, and it was obvious they had not been used to take their owner's life.

Before leaving the house, where I had now been for some hours, I questioned Mr. Mainwaring as to what his views were of the affair. His answer was, that he had no theory whatever. He had known Dr. Palmer for about a year, and the greater part of that time they had been very intimate. As regards his own affairs, Doctor Palmer was peculiarly reticent. He was very hospitable, very warm-hearted, brave as a lion, of a most even temper, and full of animal spirits. He had great determination of purpose, was excessively fond of gaiety, and of the company of ladies, and his weakness in the latter respect had sometimes led him into scrapes. Such were the characteristics of the deceased gentleman as given

me by Mr. Mainwaring; and, as I pondered over the matter, it seemed to me that the cause of the murder must be sought for in the Doctor's gaiety. In other words, jealousy had prompted the crime, and my business was to try and discover who had had the best reason to be jealous. In this I saw, or fancied I saw, an exceedingly likely clue to the murderer; but at that stage of the proceedings I was bound to confess to myself that the whole affair was shrouded in mystery.

I need scarcely say, perhaps, that in setting to work to unravel this mystery I did not lose sight of the possibilities that the Surgeon's slayer might be found amongst the guests he had entertained on the night of his death. It must be borne in mind that I inclined strongly to the belief that the motive of the crime was to be found in jealousy, and the cause of that jealousy, I decided, was one of the Misses Aitkin, if not both of them. The Doctor's attention to these ladies had inflamed someone who was also enamoured of them. Thus I reasoned, and it was for me to determine who the *someone* was. Herein my field of labour was narrowed to a very limited area—that is, so long as I confined myself to the guests—for virtually my suspicions, if I really had any suspicions, rested on Mr. Mainwaring or Mr. Egerton Plunkett; but I very soon saw reason to definitely decide that I should not be justified in harbouring suspicion against these gentlemen; and, although I ascertained that the Hon. Sidney Drinkwater—who, it will be remembered, left the Doctor's house early in the evening—was smitten deeply with the charms of Miss Mabel Aitkin, she did not encourage him in the least. But, any way, he could not have been jealous

of the Doctor as far as she was concerned, as servants and friends alike were unanimous in declaring that it was Lilian who was the Doctor's favourite. And, attractive as her sister was, Lilian completely overshadowed her, for I must certainly rank her amongst the most beautiful women I have met. She had a wonderfully mobile and expressive face, that reflected like a looking-glass the varying emotions of her mind. Neither of these young women was well educated, and each lacked that polish and refinement that comes from high-breeding; but each in degree was peculiarly fascinating, though Lilian bore off the palm. In conversation her lack of thorough education was soon made apparent; but she made up for it by an amount of general knowledge that was little short of amazing, and which was due, no doubt, to the fact that she had a most retentive memory, and was a keen observer. The quality of self-possession, too, was one that she had naturally, and which she had cultivated to a very marked degree. She was capable also of arguing in a way that might have discomfited many men. But leaving Lilian and her sister for a moment, let us return to the servants.

The female portion I passed over, for I was perfectly convinced it was not a woman's hand that had destroyed the Doctor's life. In fact, the medical man who made the *post-mortem* examination averred that the knife had been driven into the body with such a force that only a very powerful man could have done it. Amongst the men servants the one that most nearly answered that description was Walter Joyce, the soldier servant of Dr. Palmer. He had a splendid physique, with a development of chest and a massiveness of limb that argued remark-

able muscular power. The character he bore in the house was that of being reticent, and now and again given to an over-indulgence in stimulants; but he was described as a singularly even-tempered and good-natured man. Before entering the Doctor's service, where he had been for six months, he was for two years with a retired army captain. The captain was dead, but his widow and family spoke of Joyce in the very highest terms of praise; and I saw nothing, and heard nothing, that would have warranted my harbouring a shadow of suspicion against him.

The sensation that was caused when the crime became known was very great, and the deceased gentleman's relatives came forward with all sorts of theories, all of which, however, when put to the test, were found to be unworkable.

Mr. Mainwaring—who proved himself to be a very practical and business-like man—agreed with me that in all probability jealousy had been the actuating motive leading to the crime. He informed me that the Doctor had been very strongly attached to Lilian Aitkin, but that she did not altogether reciprocate the warmth of his passion. He had—so the lawyer assured me—even offered her marriage, but she had refused him, much to the amazement of those who were acquainted with the circumstance. This naturally set me pondering, and I asked myself *why* a young woman in her position should have refused an offer of marriage that must have so greatly been to her advantage. It was a most suggestive circumstance to me, and I quietly set to work to learn the history of Lilian and her sister, with the following result:—

They were the only daughters of a naval officer

who, dying when they were quite children, left his widow unprovided for, and with the burden of four children—two sons besides the girls—on her shoulders. Thus it came about that the girls received but scant education. They had, however, somewhat exalted notions of the position they ought to hold in society; but finding that their poverty militated against them, they revolted against maternal control before they were out of their teens, and throwing off all the shackles of restraint they abandoned themselves to so-called gaiety. But Lilian came under the notice of a wealthy invalid lady, who, being much struck with her, offered to take her into her service as a companion, an offer the girl accepted. The lady, wishing also to do something for the sister, provided Mabel with the necessary capital to start, in partnership with her mother, a small fancy shop as a means of livelihood, and this being done, the lady went abroad, taking Lilian with her. They travelled about the Continent for some little time, and then went to India. Two years were passed in India when they started to return to Europe, but the lady became seriously ill, and was advised to remain at Malta, which she did, keeping Lilian with her. A year was spent on the island, as the invalid became attached to the place, and it seemed to suit her; but a sudden relapse of her complaint, just as she was contemplating returning to London, had a speedy fatal termination. Apart from a legacy of five hundred pounds, payable immediately, she left Lilian Aitkin a hundred a year for life.

Soon after the funeral of her benefactress, Miss Aitkin left Malta, and a hiatus occurred in the story of her movements, as for six months nobody seemed to

know what had become of her. She communicated with none of her friends, not even her sister, and for these six months she disappeared entirely from their ken. At length she turned up again in London. Her mother was then dead, and her sister was carrying on the little business. But soon after, yielding to Lilian's persuasion, she sold it, and they launched out into a whirl of excitement. In the process of time they became acquainted with Surgeon-Major Palmer, and, as I have already stated, the Doctor made Lilian an offer of marriage, which, for some reason best known to herself, she declined.

Such, in brief, was the story of these two young ladies. A story that, so far as it concerned Lilian, had a special interest for me. For bearing in mind the French proverb, *Cherchez la Femme*, I felt almost sure that it was through her the Doctor had come to his untimely end.

Let me make myself clear. I did not think that she had abetted the murderer in any way, for I saw nothing to warrant that conclusion. But what I did think was, that she had been the unconscious cause; and that, if I could fill up the gap in the story of her wanderings, I might, perchance, obtain a clue to the criminal. As it was, no clue was forthcoming. Not a trace of the weapons could be discovered; nothing amongst the Doctor's papers and letters threw any light on the matter; the most ingenious cross-examination of the servants failed to bring out anything that might have served as a guide; and the strange crime remained a profound mystery. To confess that, in the face of all this, I felt baffled, would be to do myself somewhat of an injustice. I did most certainly feel puzzled, for I might be likened to

a man in the centre of a maze, who had tried the various paths without finding egress. Still, I buoyed myself up with the thought that no puzzle invented by human brain could be so ingenious as to utterly baffle man's skill, and so I was sanguine that, sooner or later, I would run the doctor's murderer down.

I must state here that, within a few hours of the doctor's death, his executors—one of them was Mr. Mainwaring—took charge of his property; and in the course of a fortnight all the servants were discharged, as their services were no longer needed. The house, therefore, that had been the scene of so much revelry and careless pleasure was given over to silence and solitude, while passers-by regarded it with more or less awe, for murder, foul and cruel, had desecrated it.

Impelled by some sort of intuitive feeling that by clinging to the sisters Aitkin I should ultimately obtain a clue that would enable me to unravel the mystery, I determined not to lose sight of them. Their demeanour and bearing convinced me that they were sincerely sorry for the death of their friend. They referred to him in terms of great respect, and did not hesitate to speak of the great generosity he had shown towards them. Indeed, they both averred that in him they had both lost the best friend they had ever had in the world.

Perhaps I need scarcely say that I felt a good deal of curiosity on the subject of Lilian's dream, and I frequently discussed it with her, though she was unable to remember anything that might have predisposed her to dream of the doctor's death. But somehow or another, how I cannot for the life of me tell, there began to grow up in my mind a conviction

that she was concealing something; that she had a secret which she was desirous of screening from the eyes of all the world. As I say, I am quite unable to tell why I began to think this. Probably it was due to an unconscious impression I received that she always spoke with a reservation, notwithstanding a seeming candour. But if I am not able to accurately determine the beginning of my suspicion in this respect, I know that it ultimately took hold of me, as it were, and I could not shake it off.

It may readily be supposed that I was not willing to let go anything, however shadowy, that promised even a remotely possible clue to the unravelling of this strange and startling crime. Already two months had passed, and yet we had failed to get on the track of the murderer, and, notwithstanding that a considerable Government reward was offered, and that this was supplemented by a reward of £500, promised by the relatives, for any information that would lead to the detection of the criminal, not a soul came forward with a statement of any kind that was of the slightest value. Under these circumstances I was not disposed to let go my hold of even the flimsy thread I had got. I was not blind to the likelihood of my being deluded, but I resolved to go on until the delusion became a certainty, or I proved myself right; and in pursuance of this resolve I took an opportunity one day of waiting upon Lilian Aitkin, and putting the following point blank questions to her—

‘Do you know of any one out of all your circle of acquaintances who had, or might have thought he had, an interest in Surgeon-Major Palmer’s death?’

There was a very appreciable space of time between my question and her answer, which was—

‘No, I do not.’

The tone in which this was said, and the manner with which she said it, gave force and weight to my hitherto somewhat shadowy idea that she was carefully guarding a secret. Whatever that secret might be I had no hope that I should succeed in wringing it from her; for not only was she remarkably self-possessed, but she was without that sentiment which we usually associate with women, and she had the no less striking power of keeping her emotions in subjection. In fact, she might be described as a woman absolutely incapable of emotion. As there was no emotion to play upon, no sentiment to stir up, she was not in the least likely to betray herself, supposing that she had any guilty knowledge. To give point to the foregoing remarks, let me add, that we generally reach a woman’s mind through the sentiment and emotion peculiar to the womanly temperament; and, assuming the existence of these qualities, the woman does not live who could resist giving herself away to the man capable of exerting the peculiar diplomacy necessary to the probing of the feminine heart. I had, almost from my first acquaintance with her, been convinced that in Miss Lilian Aitkin I had no ordinary woman to deal with; and mentally I likened her to a sort of Sphinx who guarded her secrets in a stony breast, against which no assaults would be effectual.

‘There is one other question I must put to you, Miss Aitkin,’ I said. ‘Will you tell me where you went to after you left Malta?’

Perhaps it will almost seem like a contradiction of what I have just set forth if I state that my question appeared to startle her, or at any rate I thought it did. But now, without the slightest hesitation, and

speaking with a decisiveness that was unmistakable, she said—

‘No, Mr. Dovovan, I will not. And I quite deny your right to question me as to my past life. If you suspect me of being either directly or indirectly concerned in the Doctor’s fate, you can, as an officer of the law, arrest me, and take such means as may seem good to you to justify your measure. But I have yet to learn that you do suspect me, and therefore I deny your right to open the volume of my foregone life. It is mine, and mine alone, and I will not yield it to inquisitiveness, idle curiosity, or unwarranted suspicion.’

This answer astonished me, for it not only proved her to be a remarkable woman, but it had in it the germs of an irrefutable logic.

‘I frankly confess that I do not think for a moment that you were *particeps criminis* to this dreadful crime,’ I said.

‘Then why do you desire to go into my past history?’ she demanded with a certain indignant peremptoriness.

‘To that question I must respectfully decline to accord a reply,’ I said firmly. ‘It is not always easy, and most certainly not desirable, to give reasons for one’s motives.’

‘Very well,’ she answered, ‘I will not seek to divine your motives, for I am indifferent to them, and it seems to me any further interviews between us will be merely a waste of time.’

This was decisive, and I left her, but I had no intention of losing sight of her, and I was inflexibly determined then to fill in that blank in the story of her life, for the thought still grew and grew upon me—haunted me, as it were—that from those lost

pages of her strange history I might get more than a hint that would help me in reading the riddle of the crime.

The sensation caused by the murder had quite died out. Indeed, it had been overshadowed by another great murder case in the metropolis, in which a woman and two children had been foully done to death; and as the public memory is short, Surgeon-Major Palmer had ceased to be remembered. I mean, of course, in a public sense; but there were men whose duty it was not to forget him, and I was one of them. I was disappointed, irritated, that I had failed so far to obtain any clue, although I was aware that I could not, no more than any other man, perform impossibilities. But I felt, so long as I had not filled in that hiatus in Lilian's history, I had not exhausted every chance of getting on the track of the criminal, and so I decided to take a step which I hoped would enable me to supply the missing page. This step was to proceed to Malta; and, in the course of the succeeding fortnight, I was crossing the Bay of Biscay, bound for the island.

On arriving at my destination I found that Miss Aitkin was well remembered, for her flirtations with many of the officers in garrison there had made her somewhat notorious. Indeed, I was informed that she had been the cause of two or three duels, and of grave scandals that had blighted more than one family's happiness.

But I learned something, to me of far greater importance than this. I was made aware of dark rumours that had found tongue of an intrigue carried on by Lilian Aitkin with a man who had been a soldier, but who was then a servant attached to the household of

the principal Maltese magistrate. The man was known by the name of James Beeston. Soon after Lilian left the island this man suddenly and mysteriously disappeared. As he was not known to have been guilty of any offence against the law, it was at first supposed that he had committed suicide. Subsequently, however, it was incontestably proved that he had gone off in a French fishing lugger, named *L'Etoile*, which was bound to Marseilles. This fact would have been without any special significance save for one thing. I learned that Lilian Aitkin, when she left the island, went direct to Marseilles also, in a French mail boat.

Here, then, were two suspicious incidents which required looking into; and I began to think I was now in a fair way of discovering what Lilian did during those months when she was lost to her friends. A few days later I was in Marseilles, and by dint of unflagging perseverance I obtained information which made it clear that Miss Lilian and James Beeston came together, and that they proceeded to Paris. This latter fact became known in rather a curious way. In the hotel where Lilian stayed in Marseilles she lost a valuable ring which had had been given to her by her benefactress. The landlord promised that every means possible should be taken to find the ring, and if found, it should be forwarded anywhere she wished. She thereupon said she would write when she got to Paris, and communicate her address. This she did. The ring was found, and sent to her at Hotel Meyerbeer, Rue Meyerbeer, Paris.

From Marselles I went off to Paris, and my investigations at the Hotel Meyerbeer revealed the fact that Lilian and James Beeston stayed there as man and wife. They remained in Paris and at the same hotel

for several months, but they did not seem to be in perfect concord with each other, and often quarrelled. It was said that the chief, if not the only, cause of this was that 'Monsieur was jealous of his pretty wife.'

But now I brought a more startling item still to light. On getting a description of James Beeston I found it tallied closely with that of Walter Joyce, who had been servant to Surgeon-Major Palmer; and when I was aware of this, the mystery began to clear away, and I felt that the road out of the maze was straight before me.

My next journey was to London, and once back in the metropolis, I lost no time in trying to arrest James Beeston, *alias* Walter Joyce, on suspicion of being the murderer of Surgeon-Major Palmer; but he had gone, leaving no trace behind him. Lilian Aitkin, however, was still at her old address, and once again I sought an interview with her.

'Miss Aitkin,' I began, 'since I last saw you I have been able to fill in the blank in your history.'

'Indeed!' she exclaimed sneeringly. 'I hope it is satisfactory to you.'

'In one sense it is; and I want you to tell me now where I shall find Walter Joyce, or James Beeston, if that is his correct name.'

'I don't know,' she answered without a change in her demeanour or her expression.

'You must pardon me,' I remarked, 'if I frankly say I more than doubt your statement.'

'You may do as you like, sir,' she said. 'I repeat, and repeat it most emphatically, that I have only seen him once since the murder of Dr. Palmer. That is two or three days after the crime.'

'Where did you see him?'

‘He called here to induce me to go abroad with him.’

‘I am not surprised to hear that,’ I answered, ‘for I may at once inform you that I have learned that you and he lived in Paris together after you left Malta.’

‘Yes, I lived with him, because he became my husband.’

I smiled incredulously, and I thought she so far betrayed her feelings as to show anger at my doubt. But there was no anger in her voice as she spoke. Her tone rather indicated contempt, indignation, scorn.

‘You have learnt much,’ she said, ‘and have shown yourself clever, but you have only learnt half the truth apparently. Excuse me for a few minutes, and I will show you something that will astonish you.’

She left the room, and was away about a quarter of an hour. Then she returned and handed me a document, which I unfolded and read, and had to confess that I was astonished, for it was a certificate of a civil marriage between Lilian Aitkin, spinster, and James Beeston, bachelor, celebrated at the British Embassy, Paris.

‘I knew you would be surprised,’ she said, with a cold cynical smile playing about her pretty mouth, and an expression of consciousness of the triumph she had scored.

‘I may well be surprised,’ I answered, ‘for I did not dream that Beeston was your husband. And now your reason for refusing Doctor Palmer’s offer of marriage is clear.’

At last her wonderful self-possession gave way—her woman’s nature asserted itself, and she burst into passionate weeping. In a few minutes she said—

‘Yes; my reason was, I could not commit bigamy. The man I was linked to I hated——’

‘Why did you marry him, then?’

‘Because, like a blind fool, I thought I loved him. Every woman becomes more or less mad at some period of her life, and I had my moments of madness. I became his wife, and immediately after I began to hate him, for he tried to make me his bond slave, and his jealousy was such that, could he have done so, he would have shut me up in an iron-bound room, and never have allowed me to look on any human face but his. I had been too much used to freedom, however—had seen too much of the world to yield readily to the shackles he tried to put upon me. I rose in revolt; we quarrelled desperately, and I left him and came to London. For a time I lost sight of him, but he found me out. It was soon after I became acquainted with Doctor Palmer. He was then in the service of a Captain Millward. He said he was in great distress, because his old mother was likely to lose a house she owned, owing to there being a mortgage on it of three hundred and fifty pounds, which had been called up, but which she could not pay. He told me, if I would let him have this sum, he would make a solemn vow never to bother me in any way again. He would give me a written undertaking to that effect, and I was to be free to do as I liked. I got the money from Dr. Palmer, and gave it to my husband. For some time after this I neither saw him nor heard anything of him, when, to my amazement and horror, I found he had entered the service of Surgeon-Major Palmer. He so far kept his promise that he did not claim me as his wife, and no one had the remotest idea of our relationship, not even my own sister.’

‘It’s a strange story,’ I remarked as she paused.

‘Yes; but it is a true one.’

‘I do not doubt it. But, tell me, was your husband not jealous of the attention paid to you by Dr. Palmer?’

‘I believe he was, but he did not show it. One night, however, he came to me—he had been drinking—and with passionate appeal and entreaty he tried to induce me to live with him again as his wife. I refused, and reminded him of his vow and written promise. Then he said some cruel and bitter things about the Doctor. This maddened me, and I told him I would rather be the slave of the Doctor than my husband’s queen.’

‘Did your husband threaten his master?’

‘No; I never heard him utter a threat.’

‘But you believe that he murdered Dr. Palmer?’

‘Now I do.’

‘Did you not do so at the very first?’

‘Not for the first few days. The thought came upon me after.’

‘Why did you not denounce him then?’

‘Do you forget that I am his legal wife! Do you forget that his disgrace and shame will reflect on me; and that if he is taken, tried, and sentenced, I shall become an outcast—shunned and pointed at as the wife of a murderer!’

I could not but admit the force of her argument, and I pitied her from the bottom of my heart. It was a sad story: a story of human weakness and sin; a story that had been repeated through all the ages, and will continue to be repeated until time shall be no more.

By the Doctor’s will she and her sister had been

left a legacy of three thousand pounds each, and I advised them that, as soon as they got the money, they should go abroad, where they were not known, and begin a new life; they adopted this advice, and went to America, and a year or two later Mabel married a well-to-do farmer, and went to live with him somewhere near Colorado. But poor Lilian, tortured by some remorse, or scourged by regret for her buried hopes—hopes that died the night Surgeon-Major Palmer was assassinated—sought for Lethe in potent drink, falling at last into the clutch of the demon of consumption, which hurried her to an untimely grave.

With regard to James Beeston, *alias* Walter Joyce, it remains for me to say he managed to elude man's vengeance. Notwithstanding the reward, and the fact that his portrait was circulated in every civilised country in the world, no tale or tidings of him were ever forthcoming. For months and months I tried to get on his track, but failed. It is highly probable that, by some means or other, he came to know soon after the murder that I was watching his wife, and thinking that she might betray him, he slipped from the country, leaving no trace behind. His crime was a dastardly one, and I have always bitterly regretted that he managed to escape the punishment due, but at least I have the satisfaction of knowing that I was successful in clearing away the mystery that at first surrounded Surgeon-Major Palmer's death.

As a sequel to the foregoing narrative, I may mention that some years after the crime the grounds at the back of what was once Dr. Palmer's house were being cleared for building purposes when an old, decayed oak trunk, which had been a conspicuous object at the bottom of the paddock owing to its

being entirely covered with a rich and luxuriant growth of ivy, was cut down, and while being sawn in pieces there was found in a hollow of it an old navy revolver and a formidable Spanish dagger. Both these weapons were much corroded with rust, as they had lain there since the night of the murder, for there could not be any reasonable doubt they were the weapons that had been used to kill the unfortunate Doctor. Five chambers of the revolver were still loaded, and as the bullet which had been taken from the dead man's head had been preserved, it was found to exactly correspond with those which were in the weapon. The fact of the murderer having used two weapons for his fiendish work seemed to indicate that the crime had been deliberately planned. Probably he thought that he might miss his aim with the pistol in the dark, and so had armed himself with the poignard. Very likely he shot his victim first, and the poor man fell forward on his face, and then, to make assurance doubly sure, the assassin plunged the knife into his back. This is only conjecture, but it is, at least, feasible. Whatever the *modus operandi* was, the deed was done, and then the cowardly slayer hid his deadly tools in the hole of the tree. He must, of course, have known beforehand of that hole, and deemed it a safe hiding-place, as in truth it proved to be, for I myself examined the ivy, thinking it might conceal the weapons, but I failed to discover the hole, and little did I think then I was within a few inches of the articles I was so anxious to find.

IN A SMUGGLER'S DEN.

ALTHOUGH it has been my fate to wander pretty extensively over the face of the habitable globe, and to see many fair scenes in beautiful lands, I think that, in certain respects, the English South Downs are unsurpassed. I venture on this assertion with some amount of diffidence, and with no desire to institute comparisons. But it will be admitted that it seems sometimes as if Nature had put forth unusual efforts to gladden the eye with a picture of perfect beauty, and in the South Downs she has certainly done this. As to what constitutes beauty from a picturesque point of view, is, as I am aware, a point open to discussion; and, as there are many minds, so there are many opinions. Still, we are all agreed on one thing—that is, that in order that a natural picture should be beautiful in the strictest esthetic sense it should contain many elements. Now, what are the elements of beauty in this connection? Firstly, there should be richness of colour; secondly, diversity of outline; thirdly, softness of perspective; fourthly, an utter absence of anything like incongruity. It may almost sound like unpardonable redundancy to say that the picturesque must be made up of picturesque features; but a little examination will show us that such an expression is perfectly admissible. A square-towered, ivy-clad church, for instance, in the midst of a

landscape, however beautiful, serves, as it were, to emphasise the picturesqueness, for it is picturesque in itself. Again, a ship with all her sails set, and drifting lazily on a sun-lit sea, lends point to the seascape, and who will say that an old boat lying on the shore, with a backing of dark brown rocks, does not give a finishing touch to the view, which makes it all that can be desired as a picture?

I fear that I have but imperfectly expressed what I wish to convey, but let me return to the South Downs. Here, in certain seasons of the year, we have a wealth of the very richest colouring that Nature is capable of turning out of her laboratory—at any rate, in northern regions. The emerald turf—and where else is there such turf—stretches for miles and miles in undulating sweeps, that at times slope gently down to the beach, and anon breaks suddenly off, leaving great walls of white and striated cliffs. At some places these cliffs go sheer down into the water, which is constantly hurling green breakers at them. At others their bases rest on golden sand, and the sea touches them not, save when their faces are wetted by the salt spray blown in by the wind. These Downs are the haunts of innumerable sea birds, and the wild plovers have their home there. The Downs are also the feeding grounds of one of the finest breeds of sheep in the world, and in summer time the white fleeces of the sheep dotting the brilliant green sward produce a most charming effect.

To lie on the edge of one of the great cliffs on a warm, clear summer's day and to gaze up to the blue sky, or across the bluer sea, is to enjoy a sense of dreamy repose that is entrancing. I once found my-

self under such circumstances one perfect day. I was enjoying a holiday and seeking rest for mind and body. I had chosen this southern coast because it had always had a charm for me. Its bold front—one of the gateways of England—that has defied the elements for tens of thousands of years, no less than the enemies who have turned their eyes towards England as towards a promised land, is rich with the most stirring associations. There is not a mile of the splendid sea front that has not a perfect library of tradition—of stories weird, of wild legends, of thrilling adventures, of magnificent heroism; and he who can wander there and gaze out to the silver streak which has girt us round with an inviolable barrier and not feel the blood stir within him must be a soulless clod indeed.

On the day that I am instancing I do not think the weather could have come nearer perfection than it was. A brilliantly star-lit night, warm and odorous as that of some more southern clime, had given place to a day of splendour. The sun god rose in a flame of crimson, and the breeze of the darkness died down till the sea, like a burnished mirror of silver, flashed till the air was filled with palpitating light. As night folded her star-gemmed robe, and the golden glow in the east proclaimed the morn, I started from a charming hostelry in one of those quaint and restful Kentish villages where the very stones of the houses are saturated with the brine of the ocean. My knapsack was on my back, my cares were few, my heart was light, my destination anywhere where the night might find me. I intended to keep in sight of the sea; to drink in the ozone as much as possible; to dream and idle and loiter in delicious indolence, throwing myself on

the velvety turf when tired, and refreshing myself when necessary from my frugal store of bread and cheese, which I carried in my bag. To wander thus, careless and untrammelled; to have no thought of the passionate world, whose roar and moan go up from the great cities; to have no fixed rout or destination; to feel utterly unconcerned about time, and to be oblivious of the thousand and one abstruse problems that vex the great heart of humanity, is to enjoy a sense of freedom, a delicious vagrantness that turns life into a worldless poem. No wonder that the untutored savage, used to the freedom of his vast forests and boundless plains, pines and dies when the restrictions, restraints, and artificial modes of living are imposed upon him by so-called civilisation. No wonder that certain birds, when caught and caged, burst their tiny hearts in their vain endeavours to regain that liberty which to them *was* life, and to be deprived of which is a cruel death.

Surely it must have taken primitive man many centuries to accustom himself to the restraint of towns.

For me, I have ever been a worshipper at Nature's altar. I can take my cares and sorrows, and, laying them at her feet, feel that for the time my burden is lightened, and that I live.

I think it is John Stuart Mill who says, in one of his works, 'It is hard to die never having lived.' But, alas! tens of thousands of people do not live. They exist, they have their being, they die, but they have not lived. They have never known what it is to thrill with ecstasy in the presence of a great mountain, to be stirred with reverential emotions at the sight of the ocean, whether it be in storm or calm, to dream dreams that have no words as one wanders listlessly

through some grand old wood, where a world of subdued colour greets the eye, and the light that filters through the branches of the trees transfigures—if I may be allowed the expression—all the surroundings, until we seem to be wandering through scenes of which we have read in poems. In verity, he who has no love for Nature; he who has no sentiment for beauty in its highest aspects; he who cannot rise above the sordidness of a sordid world, knows not what it is to live. His life is the life of a worm, it is of the earth earthy.

I have given expression to the thoughts that are associated with that delightful day, because, when I wandered forth, the gyves of duty having for the time being fallen from me, my calling was forgotten. The many scenes of wretchedness, wickedness, and crime that I had had to witness had faded away, and I saw only the grandeur and the richness that Nature had lavished around. And yet before the day was done I was destined to become an unwilling actor in a remarkable little drama.

For some hours I wandered listlessly along until, on the summit of a high cliff, I threw myself on the springy turf, and, lying at full length on my back, gazed upward to the heavens, where little masses of woolly clouds moved with a monotonous motion, and produced in me a feeling that I was floating dreamingly in space, and the great world was far, far beneath me. Some bees hummed drowsily near me, attracted by a patch of sweet clover, and now and again a sea-bird uttered its plaintive cry, or a passionate lark poured forth a tempest of melody, as it soared upward into the blue ether. But these sounds were Nature's notes of harmony; they formed a lullaby that

emphasised the silence, and begot a dreamy, blissful languor that one word spoken by human lips would at once have destroyed. I must have slept, and have slept long, and yet I never seemed to lose sight of those slowly drifting clouds; never seemed to cease to fancy that I floated through space; never ceased to hear that drowsy hum, that plaintive cry, that passionate flood of melody that made the very air palpitate. But sleep I did, and when next a sense of my mundane existence stole upon me, a change had passed over the scene, a change that had in it something of weirdness. The silver flashing of the sea had ceased, and a purple gloom had spread on the face of the deep. The ships, with their white sails, thrown into bold relief by the gloom, appeared unnatural. The water, as far as the eye could reach, was one vast level plain, for not the faintest ripple broke its surface. The air was absolutely stagnant. Not a sound arose. Either the birds had gone to roost under the impression that night had come, or they had been hushed into silence by the weirdness that was on sea and land.

Far away the horizon line was sharp, rigid, and distinct, for whereas the sea was purple, the sky itself was sepia, and this, added to a certain rarefied condition of the atmosphere, caused the ships to look as if they were suspended. Everything—sky, sea, trees, grass—had become a neutral tint, as if one were looking through deeply-smoked glasses on a sunless day.

This remarkable change from brilliancy, light, and colour to deathly stillness and dun gloom was startling, for it seemed unmistakably to presage mischief. There was a conspiracy on the part of the forces of Nature, and presently there would be an outbreak amongst these forces that might become terrible and de-

structive. The fear of the unknown seemed to weigh on the birds of the air and the beasts of the field alike; and the one sought shelter in the holes and on the ridges of the cliffs, and the other cowed under the trees and the hedges. Apparently I was the only 'lord of creation' in all that scene; and the horrible calm and the funereal gloom produced a scene of nervous depression that was absolutely painful and distressing. It was already seven o'clock, and not knowing how far I was from human habitation, I rose and continued my journey. For some considerable distance my route lay over an almost level plateau, that broke away suddenly in straight cliffs, plunging down for something like five hundred feet to the shore. But after a time the land dipped rapidly, and, going at a great rate, I found myself on a level at last with the sea. On my right was the Channel—on the left stretched away a bare and barren moorland, broken up by sand dunes.

And now there came a strange sighing in the air, and on the purple water there were white rifts, for the sigh was the sighing of the rising wind. And suddenly there leapt from the far-off horizon seaward, and extended to nearly two hundred degrees of the arc of the sky, a jagged flame that filled the air with an awful light, leaving me blind for a few moments, and making the gloom intenser; and five minutes later there rolled in from the south an ominous and muffled peal of thunder. Darker grew the sky, and sudden puffs of wind, warm almost as the breath of a sirocco, whistled over the sand-hills, and bent down to the ground the spare, wiry blades of grass that struggled for existence in that arid waste. Once more was the air filled with flame, and now enormous

drops of rain began to patter down. Seaward a curtain seemed to have fallen, and the ships were hidden from my view. The tempest was raging out there, and the rain was lashing the sea into foam. Not wishing to get drenched, although I was deeply interested in watching the gathering storm, I hurried on, and ran to the top of a high dune to see if there was any house near. A quarter of a mile or so away on the shore line I spied a dwelling, and, getting its bearings, I set off as hard as I could go, for I heard the roar of the wind and the rain as they rushed in from the dark waters, where now there seemed to hang a huge black pall.

As I neared the house I saw a signboard on a post, on the seaward side, and in a few moments I was enabled to read on the signboard that the house was 'The Fisherman's Rest.' I was delighted, and considered myself highly fortunate in having so opportunely found an inn. As I reached the door the storm burst in fierce wrath. The wind shrieked demoniacally as it hurled itself against the house; the thunder mingled its crash with the roar of the gale; the rain seethed and hissed as it lashed the sea, that tossed and tumbled now in foaming anger. Instead of the inn-door being open for the storm-caught traveller, the house might have been a house of the dead. The door was fast barred, the windows were all closed, no smoke rose from the chimneys, and not a sign nor a sound was there of a human being. I hammered on the door impatiently with my stick, and hammered again and again before there were any signs of life within. Then an upper window was raised, and a woman thrust forth her head. She spoke no word, but, after a hurried glance, she withdrew,

shut the window, and soon I heard her clattering down the carpetless wooden stairs. In a few moments she flung the door open, and asked angrily—

‘What do you want, master?’

‘Well, I want refreshment and shelter from the storm,’ I answered, surprised by the roughness of the greeting. ‘This is a public-house, is it not?’

‘Yes. Well, no—that is, we haven’t got no licence now. They tuk it from us.’

‘Anyway, you will, perhaps, let me shelter from the rain,’ I remarked, as I stepped into the passage, ‘and let me ask you why you don’t take your signboard down if you’ve got no licence?’

‘Ay. Well, we’ve been for taking it down, but we ain’t a had no time.’ The woman growled, and as it seemed to me, scowled at me.

She was, I had almost said, an uncanny sort of creature, and had I met her out there on the moorland I might have been inclined to think she was an evil spirit. She was tall and lank, with an oval face that was deeply wrinkled and puckered. Her skin was cinnamon-colour by long exposure to sun and wind. Her hair, scant in quantity, was iron-grey, and straggled in an unkempt fashion about her low forehead. Her eyes, overhung by coarse, wiry eyebrows, were deep set, without a kindly gleam in them. Her lank body was clothed in a dirty, patched print gown, that clung about her and displayed her bony angularities. She must have been at least sixty years of age, but was straight and powerful-looking. It was only too painfully obvious that I was not a welcome guest, and I asked her how far it was to the nearest inn where I could get lodging for the night.

‘The highest place is five miles off,’ she answered.

That was by no means cheering information, for the rain now was pouring down as if a second deluge had burst upon the earth; and never, out of the tropics, have I seen lightning so brilliant and so incessant. Had it not been for the rain, I should have enjoyed watching the storm, for to my mind there is something sublimely grand in lightning; but I confess to a very decided objection to a drenching. So I asked this remarkable woman if she could not let me remain for a time, and I would pay her for the accommodation she afforded.

‘Well, you see,’ she answered, in somewhat pleasanter tones, ‘as I told you afore, we ain’t got no licence; but if you like to come in and take what I can give you, you can pay me what you like.’

I thought this was fair and honest of her, and my opinion of her somewhat improved, since she seemed to be a respecter of the law. She led the way into a small, low-ceilinged, stuffy room, where the paper was peeling off the walls with damp. It had evidently been the tap-room, for there were fixed forms all round, and small fixed tables. It was now getting quite dark, and she said—

‘Bide a bit, and I’ll get a candle.’

She went away, and was absent quite ten minutes, during which I groped my way to one of the forms and sat down, relieving myself of my dripping knapsack. At last she appeared, carrying a battered tin candlestick, and shading the candle with her big, bony hand.

‘Are you alone?’ I asked.

‘Yes. My daughter has gone over to the village, and the men-folk are out fishing.’

‘Fishing!’ I exclaimed. ‘They will have a bad time of it, surely, in a storm like this?’

‘Oh, they’re all right,’ she answered with, as I thought, an air of nonchalance and indifference, which, however, I attributed to long familiarity with the sea and its perils, and I began to think that her harshness and apparent cynicism were due to the hardness of the life she had obviously led—a life that must have been a never-ending struggle for daily bread. So I viewed her in a more kindly light, and inquired, with a display of interest, why the licence had been taken away?’

‘Well, you see, the folk as had this place afore us used to sell stuff out o’ hours. It was an old man and woman and their son as kept it. The man was drowned, and the son went to Australia, and my man, who’s a sailor man, bought the place.’

‘Bought it!’

‘Yes. Rump and stump. He gave two hundred pounds for it, as much as it was worth, for it’s just tumbling to pieces. But when we got it, the Magistrate wouldn’t let us have the licence any more, so we just have to do the best we can for a living.’

My interest in the woman was naturally increased by this information, and I said—

‘Well, I know of no law that can prevent you dispensing hospitality to a storm-driven stranger, and as I am roaming about on holiday-bent, perhaps you can find me a shake-down for the night, and give me something to eat, for I am tired, and as hungry as a hunter. And before I leave I shall ask you to accept a present from me for your kindness.’

She did not seem very eager to close with the bargain, and considered for some moments before answering. Then—

‘Well, if you don’t mind the roughness, I can put

you up for a night, and we've got a barrel o' ale for our own drinking. You can have some of that, and I can give you some cold beef and bread and pickles.'

'That's capital,' I answered, 'and I'm your guest.'

So she went away to procure the eatables, and I walked to the window and peered out. The sea was white with foam; the sky inky black, save when the lightning lit it up, while the rain came down in a sheet, so that I felt truly thankful even for the accommodation of this lonely house, which was shaken by the hurricane's might and drenched with the flying spume of the angry sea.

Soon the woman returned, bearing a coarse clean towel, which she spread on one of the tables as a cloth, and then placed the remains of a joint of beef before me, together with a loaf of home-baked bread, half a bottle of pickles, and a piece of rankish butter. She went off again, and came back with a quart jug full to the brim with foaming ale. I had to be content with a tin plate, a very common knife, and a two-pronged steel fork, while a mug without a handle did duty for a glass. There was a tin pepper castor, much battered, a broken cup with some mustard in it, and a saucer containing rough bay salt. An epicure with a dainty stomach might have turned up his nose at this humble fare and primitive *service de table*, but I had brought a robust appetite to bear; and I did full and ample justice to the spread, while my hostess sat and worked at knitting a stocking, and vouchsafed curt answers to such remarks as I addressed to her.

By the time my repast was finished it was ten o'clock. The thunder had died down; the lightning had become fitful, but the rain still poured, and the wind howled.

Filling my pipe, I leaned back grateful for the meal, and grateful for the accommodation.

'You've a pretty hard life of it here, missus,' I remarked.

'Ay,' she said with a sort of grunt.

'It must be dreary enough in winter.'

'God knows it is,' she exclaimed with a bitter, cynical sneer, 'but poor folk have to put up with anything.'

'Still, as you and your husband are the owners of this house, you are better off than a good many people.'

'Bricks and mortar and rotten old timbers don't fill one's belly, nor clothe one's back,' she growled almost savagely; and as the subject seemed to have a tendency to make her angry, I let it drop, and began to ask her questions about the country. Nevertheless she was not mollified, and appeared to me to grow restless and uneasy, and she paused in her work now and again, and appeared to be listening intently. This led me to ask her if her daughter would return that night, and she answered gruffly—

'Yes; I'm expecting her.'

'She'll surely have a dark and dreary journey if she intends to walk?'

'Oh, she knows the way well enough, and knows how to take care of herself. But ain't you going to bed?'

This question was asked so abruptly and snappishly that I laughed and said—

'Oh, of course; if you want me to go, I'll go.'

'Come on then,' she exclaimed, as, rising suddenly, she seized the candle and stalked out of the room. I thought her conduct strange, but made no comment, simply following her. She led the way down the

passage, and, opening a door, ushered me into a fair sized room at the back of the house. The furniture consisted of a very old four-post bedstead, the bed being covered with a horse-cloth. There were two or three flour casks in the room, and an old chest of drawers and two or three chairs, each minus some of its parts. The floor was carpetless, and black with dirt. There were a number of oil skins, such as are worn by sailors, hung on pegs on the wall, two or three sou'westers, and a huge pair of sea boots; and in one corner of the room was a pile of fishing net. The place reeked with a combination of smells, a fishy one prevailing.

'Are you a sound sleeper?' asked my strange hostess.

'Yes, as a rule, I am.'

'Does it take much to waken you?'

This question seemed to me rather a peculiar one, and for the first time something like suspicion came into my mind.

"Well," I answered deliberately, 'under certain circumstances, no.'

She seemed as if she divined my thoughts, and exclaimed—

'Oh, I only asked 'cos the men folk'll be comin' in maybe about twelve o'clock, and I thought their clatter might rouse you; but you needn't be afeard. There's nought as'll do you any harm.'

'Oh, I'm not afraid,' I said; 'and I daresay I'll sleep soundly enough.'

'Well, good night to you,' and so saying she slammed the door, and I heard her go down the passage.

Pondering on her questions and answers, I began to have visions of all sorts of things that might have

disturbed a nervous man, for the house was lonely, very lonely, and murder might be done there, and never brought to light. But I wasn't nervous. Nevertheless, I examined the door, and I found it could be fastened on the inside by a broad, flat, wooden bolt, sliding into a deep socket, and which I was satisfied would make the door secure enough against intruders unless great force was used to burst it open. Then I gave my attention to the window. That seemed secure also, and moreover I observed that it was protected on the outside by three iron bars. In case I should have to fight, I had a stout oak stick, with which I could have given a good account of myself, except, of course, against firearms.

Being thus satisfied with my inspection, I began to prepare for bed, when I remembered I had left my pipe, a favourite meershaum, on the table in the room where I had had my supper. So, opening the door and taking the candle, I went for it, and when I reached the room, I noted that a lighted candle had been placed on a high stool in the window, and on dwelling on this, I concluded it was a signal for 'the men folk' who were coming in from sea. Then I dismissed the matter from my mind, and only partially undressing myself, and placing the oak stick alongside of me, I lay down on the outside coverlet of the bed, and very soon had sunk into a sound slumber, noting, however, before I did so, that it was half-past eleven by my watch as I wound it up.

Perhaps the strongest evidence that the suspicions I entertained before retiring to rest did not make a very deep impression is, that I slept soundly up to nearly four o'clock—a dreamless, refreshing sleep, the result of a delightful day in pure, bracing air. But

suddenly I awoke with these words ringing in my ear—

‘What the devil did you take him in for?’

The voice was that of a man. It was guttural, bass, and metallic, and somehow seemed to suggest a sea-faring man, for there was that rough ring in it which sailors acquire by having to exert their voices so much when at sea.

As the question seemed applicable to me, I naturally felt an interest. But moreover the voice had in it a growl of anger, if not menace, so that my faculties were quickened. The man’s brusque demand was answered by a woman, and the woman was the one who had entertained me. This is what she said—

‘I took him in cos I thought we’d make a few shillings out of him, and I wasn’t sure about your coming to-night. I thought, maybe, the storm would stop your running the cargo.’

‘You’re a fool,’ snapped the man, gruffly. ‘If I’d awaited cos o’ the storm, the hawks would a spied us soon as daylight come in.’

‘Well, you needn’t trouble yoursel’,’ returned the woman. ‘The fellow’s sound asleep, and you can have the stuff stowed in an hour.’

‘Well, if I thought as he wasn’t asleep, shiver me if I wouldn’t drill a hole in him with my knife, for I ain’t a going to lose this haul for the best chap as ever lived.’ Thus answered the man, and the woman said in response—

‘Go out, and bring the things, you fool, and don’t stand there growling like that. I tell you the bloke’s all right. He told me he was a having of his holidays, and was a tramping about to amuse hissels, and he ain’t likely to trouble us.’

The man made some reply which I couldn't catch, and then I heard his heavy footsteps, telling unmistakably of big sea-boots, as he went down the passage.

The few words I had caught put me on the *qui vive*, and I realised at once that something wrong was going on. I slipped out of bed and drew back the curtain from the window. The moon had risen, and by its rays I was enabled to see the face of my watch, and noted that it was five minutes to four. Then I heard the boards creaking just outside my door, and I instinctively knew that the woman was listening, trying to assure herself, no doubt, that I was wrapped in slumber. Consequently, I remained very still, and presently she went away. I did not light the candle, as it might have betrayed me; but, dressing myself quickly and noiselessly, I decided to try and find out what was going on. I knew that the door of the house facing seawards was open, for the wind was blowing directly in, and groaning and whistling through the crevices of my door.

I have already mentioned that my room was at the back of the house. I found that the window looked on to a wilderness of a garden, surrounded by a dilapidated and tumble-down fence. I tried the window, and found I could open it easy enough, but the space between the iron bars, to which I have already alluded, was too small to admit of my passing through. A thin boy might have got through, but not a full-grown man. I, therefore, had no alternative but to wait the development of events.

The fresh air that came in when I opened the window was delightful. The storm and rain had cooled the atmosphere, which was heavy with the

odours of flowers and of the sea. A fairly strong breeze was blowing, and, as it stirred the foliage of the trees and shrubs, it made pleasant music, that was varied by the chirp of a night-cricket. The moon was shining brilliantly, but my view was restricted to the garden, as the trees prevented one seeing what was beyond. I should have liked to have gone out and roamed about, drinking in the rich air that was saturated with the ozone of the ocean. But the iron bars rendered egress by the window impossible for me. So I crept back to the door and listened, and I heard two female voices in whispered conversation. The one I recognised as belonging to the old woman; the other was strange, but I guessed that it belonged to the daughter. I could not gather what was said, save a word here and there, which, however, gave me no clue to the subject they were discussing, unless the following sentence did so—

‘He’s all right—I tell you he’s all right,’ spoken by the old woman with a rising inflexion and an emphasis of irritability.

In a little while I heard the two women pass my door, go along the passage, and, as I inferred, leave the house. Then a silence—an absolutely impressive silence—followed, save for the wind that still moaned through the crevices. I waited for some minutes, almost holding my breath, to catch the slightest sound. But everything seemed to indicate that for the time being I was the sole occupant of the house. I, therefore, drew back the wooden bolt as noiselessly as possible, opened the door, that creaked a little on its hinges, and peeped out. I was enabled to see right down the passage, and through the open doorway of the front door. And this doorway framed a narrow

strip of the beach and the moonlit sea, making a remarkably striking picture. Nearly opposite my room was another room on the other side of the passage. The door was ajar, and I saw that a light was burning. I crept across, pushed the door further open, and peered in. The window of the room was closely blinded by, as it seemed to me, a piece of old sail. Two candles were burning, each one stuck in a bottle, and on the floor was a horn lantern with a light in it. The room seemed full of lumber. There were oars, masts of boats, fishing-nets, pieces of ropes, old sails, blocks, &c. But what interested me most was an open trap-door. This was suggestive, and I resolved at all risk to know what it meant. So I stepped into the room, lifted up the horn lantern, and, holding it over the hole in the floor, I saw that a ladder went down to a cave or cellar, and I thought to myself—

‘That place, as sure as I’m alive, is a receptacle for contraband goods, and the people of this lonely house are smugglers.’

I restored the lantern to its former position, and as it was evident that no one else was stirring, I stole along the passage, and peeped out very cautiously. The scene was beautiful, for the sea was silvered by the moon, and there were lines of white foam on the sandy beach. But in the foreground of the picture was a group of figures including two women and three men. A large boat with one mast was riding at anchor some distance out, and I saw a small rowing boat coming from this boat towards the shore. The doorway in which I stood was in shadow, for the moon being high shone on the back of the house. It thus gave me an advantage, as I could see without being

seen, and I was perfectly convinced now that I was alone in the house, so I waited and watched.

In a few minutes I saw the little boat shoot through the surf, and she was pounced upon by the men and women, and hauled up on the beach. Then the two women and their companions lifted things out of the boat and came towards the house, so I hurried back to my room, and barred the door again. In a few minutes they entered the house with subdued noise, and they went into the room where the lights were burning. Presently I heard the man, whose voice had wakened me, say—

‘Stow them kegs, Jack, in th’ well. Devil himself won’t find ’em there.’

About a quarter of an hour elapsed, and the woman crept to my door and listened, then said—

‘There ain’t a sound. He is sleeping all right.’

I could not help smiling, and thought to myself—
‘Fate has gone against you this time, my good woman, and your sin has found you out.’

Once more they all left the house, and some of them were smoking, for there was a powerful odour of very strong tobacco. Then ensued another spell of silence, during which I opened my door and stole forth again, and I watched this little band of smugglers—for smugglers I hadn’t a doubt they were—go down to the beach for another load.

I should have liked very much to have descended into that cellar or cave where they were stowing the things, but I was doubtful if there would be time before the people returned. And I did not deem it prudent, either in my own interest or the interest of justice itself, that I should be caught playing the spy. I could not have hoped to successfully tackle all the

band, and if I had managed to get away, and gone off for assistance, it was pretty certain that the smugglers would have taken means to effectively hide all traces of their illicit trade.

My position was certainly a peculiar one, and but for the storm I should hardly have made the discovery I had made. It did occur to me to conceal myself in the room where the things were being secreted, and I hurried to the room to see if it were practicable to do so. But I came to the conclusion it was not, without grave risk of being found out. The candles and the lantern were still burning, and, seizing the latter, I descended the ladder a few steps, and, holding the light up, I peered into the gloom. The light was too feeble, however, for one unaccustomed to the place to see much; but I made out that it was a vaulted cellar, and that the floor was littered with boxes and other things.

I got up again and went back to my room, only barely in time before the people returned. In fact, I was not quite sure that they had not seen my retreating form, and for some minutes I waited in suspense, grasping my oak stick, and expecting to hear them battering at my door. They gave no evidence, however, that they had seen me. And as I did not think I could gain any more knowledge than I had already gained, I lay down on the bed and soon fell asleep.

It was half-past eight when I awoke. It did not take me long to perform my toilet, and that done I went out. No one seemed to be stirring, but the front door was open.

It was a glorious morning, all light and brilliancy and motion, for the sea was dancing in the breeze,

and short, crispy waves seemed to be chasing each other merrily on the shore, making a line of foam that, being caught up by the wind, was blown inland like feathers, and the spray as it was thrown up in the lines of light scintillated with the prismatic hues of the rainbow.

As I sauntered forth I observed the woman whose acquaintance I had already made, and a young and by no means bad-looking woman, of about four-and-twenty, sitting on a bench in the sunlight not far from the door, mending a fishing net.

‘Good morning, mister,’ exclaimed the elderly woman as soon as she saw me. Then she looked at me very keenly as she asked—‘Did you sleep well?’

‘Oh, yes,’ I said, ‘very well,’ and not wishing her to question me further on the point, I asked—‘Is this your daughter?’ alluding to the young woman.

‘Yes, that’s my gal.’

‘And not a bad looking girl either,’ I remarked.

‘No, she ain’t so bad,’ said the mother, with a touch of genuine pride.

‘Is she married?’ I asked.

‘No; she’s engaged to a sailor who’s away to——’

‘Where is it he’s gone to, Nellie?’

‘To Valparaiso.’

‘Ah, yes, that’s it—Val——’

‘Paraiso,’ added the girl, as her mother paused again.

‘Yes, that’s it,’ repeated the old woman, but without venturing to pronounce the name of the place this time, for it was obvious that she found the pronunciation difficult. Then she added with a sigh—‘I wish he were here now, lass, and would take you

away. He's a good lad, and will do better for you than your father will do.'

The girl made no answer, but to me the remark was significant, and it gave me the opportunity of asking if the father was in.

'Oh, ay; he's sleeping in now. Him and the lads was out at sea all day yesterday, and didn't get on shore till nigh on daylight, so they're pretty tired.'

'You have some sons, I suppose?'

'Yes, I've three on 'em, and there are two nephews what lives with us, and my husband's partner.'

'What partner is that?'

'The chap as has got a half share in the boat.'

'And do the whole lot of you live by fishing?' I inquired, with an air of innocence.

'Yes, indeed; and bad enough living it is. Sometimes in winter the men can't get out at all.'

'Then you starve?' I suggested, a little sarcastically.

'Well, we come most nigh it sometimes.'

It was on my tongue to ask her if the 'men folk' had brought home a cargo of fish the last night and what they had done with it; but I checked myself, for I saw how the question might raise suspicions. So I said instead—

'Well, can you give me any breakfast, for I want to be moving?'

'Nellie,' she said to her daughter, 'go and get the gent.'s breakfast ready.'

So Nellie rose and went into the house, and I strolled down on the shore. The small boat had been pulled up high and dry, and the large sailing-boat was anchored some distance out, and I saw that the name painted on her was 'Nellie Bell.' As I

sauntered back to the old woman I asked her if her family name was Bell, and she told me that it was, and that the boat had been called after her daughter.

For some little time I stood and chatted about the weather, the country, and the crops, until Nellie appeared at the door and beckoned me to go to my breakfast, which consisted of some fairish coffee and a dish of ham and eggs.

Somehow I felt interested in the girl and engaged her in conversation, and gradually learned that she and her family had lived in Ramsgate, and had a fairly good business as fisher folk. But one or two bad seasons, followed by the loss of their nets and boats in a tremendous storm, involved them in difficulties, and with a little money her father had in a building society he bought the house they were then in which was going to be pulled down, so that he got it cheap.

‘And do you like living here?’ I asked.

‘Indeed no,’ she said with energy. ‘I wish to goodness I was out of it. I’ve been trying for a long time to get a place as a servant, and I was over in the town yesterday seeing a person, but I don’t know whether I’ll get anything or not. It’s awful dull here,’ she added, ‘and me and my father don’t get on very well together.’

‘Then if you’ll take my advice,’ I answered, ‘you’ll do anything that’s honest rather than stay here.’

‘Well, I’d clear out to-morrow if I could,’ she exclaimed.

Promising her that I would interest myself in her behalf I rose from a very substantial breakfast just as the old woman entered. I rewarded her suitably for her attention and hospitality, and bestowing a

small *douceur* on Nellie, took my departure much disappointed at not having seen the men folk; but exhausted, no doubt, by their nocturnal labours, they were all 'sleeping in.'

The delightful feeling of *insouciance* that I had enjoyed on the previous day was for the nonce gone, as I had a duty to perform now that I was bound to respect. I was truly sorry that it had fallen to my lot during my holiday to have to lay information against these people. But even had my calling been other than it was, I should still have been bound, as an honest man, to report the discovery I had made, for it was only too clear that the interesting Bell family were making a business of defrauding their country's treasury. That was a serious offence, and as a representative of the law's majesty I could not hold my peace.

The morning was full of that glory of fresh beauty which is so conspicuous in fine weather after a heavy thunderstorm has relieved the air of its superabundant electricity. The deep blue sky was a study in its masses of fleecy clouds that tempered the too ardent rays of the sun. The rain had laid the dust, so that the air was as clear as crystal. The sea was one great mass of scintillating light, and the sailing craft seemed instinct with joyous life as they sped before the fresh breeze; while from the ethereal heights poured down a flood of passionate melody from the throats of the soaring larks. The landscape was a wonderful picture in its lights and shades, its gradation of colours, its ever varying outlines, its great stretches of fields green as emerald with grass, or tinged with gold where the corn was fast ripening. Then there were patches of woodland so suggestive of

shade and dreamy stillness; and farmhouses, embosomed amongst trees, dotted the land, and were varied by the numerous windmills, whose sails spun merrily round in the bracing breeze.

My enjoyment of all this beauty was somewhat marred by the disagreeable duty that had so unexpectedly devolved upon me. But I had to submit, so made my way to the town, some five miles' distant from that lonely house by the sea; and, arrived there, I lost no time in giving information to the coast-guard people, whose business it was to attend to the matter.

So far, then, my part in the matter ended, but I may chronicle what followed. Eight or nine stalwart coastguardsmen, armed, and led by an officer, marched to the Bells' residence, taking the people by surprise, and demanding to know if they had any contraband goods on the premises. Of course, they denied that they had, and the 'men folk,' who seemed disposed to offer resistance, were placed under arrest, and a search took place. It is highly probable, however, that but for my having overhead the remark about the well the search would have been fruitless of any result, for in the actual cellar itself there was nothing but a quantity of old boxes and packing cases, which the Bells said were being gradually broken up for firewood. But, owing to the information I had furnished, a very careful inspection was made of the floor, and under a heap of old boxes a trap-door was found, so skilfully devised, however, that it might well have escaped any but the most thorough search. When this trap was raised it revealed a large bricked recess, and in this was found stowed, evidently by those who had been used to stowing things in a ship's

hold, nearly half a ton of plug tobacco, and a great quantity of French brandy and German 'raw' spirit, besides nearly a hundred boxes of common cigars.

When the Bells heard that their ingeniously-planned hiding-place had been brought to light, they were furious, for the goods found represented a large investment of capital. They had the good sense, however, to see the utter hopelessness of resistance, and they were marched into the town, while a guard was placed over the things until they could be removed, which was done in the course of the day, and, news of the discovery having spread, a large number of people wended their way out to the old house, actuated by the merest curiosity.

Further investigation proved, beyond doubt, that the Bells had followed smuggling for a long time, and made it a very profitable business, for, in spite of Mrs. Bell's statement to me about the poverty of the family, they were found to have a banking account of several hundred pounds. On the night that I passed under their roof, the men had been out in their smack to mid channel, where, by pre-arrangement, they had met a French schooner, and had received a quantity of tobacco and brandy from her.

Of course the den of smugglers was broken up, all their property was confiscated, and very heavy fines were imposed, and as the men were unable to meet them, they were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, and, if capable of reflection at all, they must have come to the conclusion that, after all, 'honesty is the best policy.'

It only remains for me to say that I did not forget my promise to Nellie, and I was successful in getting a philanthropic lady in London to interest herself in

her, with the result that Nellie subsequently obtained a situation as a domestic servant in a very good family. I heard later on that she had married her sailor lad, who had voyaged to Valparaiso, and after that I lost sight of her.

TRACKED BY A FOOTPRINT.

THE STORY OF A STRANGE MURDER.

ONE autumn morning, more than a quarter of a century ago, I was urgently requested by telegraph to go down into one of the English Midland counties to investigate a case of murder, and endeavour to track the criminal. The telegram came from the Chief Superintendent of Police of the district, and it expressed a strong desire that I would start off immediately, as the crime was surrounded with a good deal of mystery, and though five days had elapsed, not the slightest clue to the criminal had been obtained.

I had already heard of the murder, and felt interested in it, and though it put me to considerable inconvenience, I complied with the Superintendent's request, and set off from the North, where I was then stationed.

I remember perfectly well that it was a raw, sombre, gusty day, full of the sadness of dying things, and calculated to beget in any one with a tendency to moralise a depression of spirits, if not absolute melancholy. Everywhere the trees seemed to be shivering in the rude gusts of cold wind that swept over the land, filling the air, and strewing the ground with withered leaves. The sky was like a sheet of lead, and, turn which way the eye would, no warmth of colour gladdened it. I could not help thinking, as we

sped over the lonely and desolate mountain moorland, known as Shap Fell, where all nature wore an aspect of savageness, and the wanton wind seemed to rave with passionate fierceness, that it was a fitting day to deal with murder. Of course that was mere sentiment; but when all is bright and gladsome, when the sun shines brilliantly, and the earth is carpeted with flowers, do not our minds dwell more readily on life, and hope, and pleasure? And death at such a time is apt to strike us as a startling and strange incongruity—at any rate, death by violence. When I reached my destination as far as the train could take me, there was an eight miles' drive before me. The Superintendent himself met me with a dogcart. The day was darkening to its close; the wind had freshened; rain was beginning to fall, and a funereal pall seemed to have been dropped over the land.

As we drove along the dismal country road that was bordered with trees looking gaunt and spectral in the gloom, and which twisted, and writhed, and creaked, and groaned every time the blustering gusts lashed them, as if they were suffering actual pain, the Superintendent told me the following story:—

About twenty-two years previously, there had come to the neighbourhood a man by the name of James Naylor. He was a native of Manchester, and at that time was thirty years of age, or thereabouts. His trade was that of a bricklayer, and he worked as an ordinary labourer for some time. He was married, his family consisting of his wife and a son, who, however, was not his wife's son, but an illegitimate child, then seven years of age. This fact was made known by the wife herself. James Naylor was notable for two things. Firstly, a magnificent physique, that gave

him the strength of a giant; secondly, a peculiar exclusiveness and reticence. By exclusiveness I mean that he held himself aloof from other people, and was never to be seen in the village public-houses, where numbers of his class congregated. His reticence, which seemed to be shared by his wife, prevented people from learning anything of his past life or of his present affairs. But notwithstanding this, he was considered to be very respectable; and though his wages were only about thirty shillings a week, he paid his way regularly, and was never in debt. Two or three years after coming to the village he became possessed of a few hundred pounds through the will of an uncle, who had gone to Australia and saved a little money. Mr. Naylor did not make this information public himself, but people got to know of it through advertisements inserted in the Manchester and other papers for James Naylor, as the executors and lawyers did not know where he was. Strangely enough, Naylor's attention was drawn to the advertisements by the narrator of the story—that is, the Chief Superintendent of Police, with whom I was riding. He had taken a fancy to Naylor owing to his steady habits, and his respectful, quiet demeanour. And he was the only person in the village that Naylor seemed to cultivate any acquaintance with. Of course Naylor went off to Manchester at once to the address of the solicitors mentioned in the advertisements, and two months later he returned, and almost immediately he made a bid for about ten acres of pasture land that had long been in the market without finding a purchaser. This land was the residue of an estate in the hands of trustees; but being so far from a railway station, no one would buy it.

On one occasion Naylor had said to the Superintendent, when they happened to be passing this very field, and, as he looked up at the board announcing 'This Land for Sale,' 'I wish I had the money to buy that land, I'd make a fortune.' Asked how the fortune would be made, he showed no disposition to enter into any explanation, and the subject dropped. The offer that Naylor made for the land, although very low, was ultimately accepted, and the bricklayer's labourer became a landed proprietor. This occasion was the only one on which he was ever known to display outward manifestations of delight. And so overjoyed was he that he collected a number of his acquaintances together, and treated them to ale and bread and cheese at the village public.

Of course much wonder was expressed by the villagers as to what he was going to do with his purchase, for, as pasture land, his estate was worth little or nothing, and as the trustees had been unable to sell it for building purposes, although there was a good deal of building going on in the district, it was not considered at all likely that Naylor would have any better luck. But Mr. James Naylor showed himself to be longer-headed than any one else round about, for he soon proved that his land consisted of a magnificent stratum of brick-clay. How he himself got to know this before he purchased must ever remain a mystery; that he did know it was evidenced in many ways, and it was speedily made pretty clear that when he told the Superintendent that, if he had the land, he would acquire a fortune, that he spoke within the mark.

In the course of six months of his entering on possession, he had erected a row of wooden sheds, and had begun operations as a brick manufacturer with a

staff of five workpeople—three women and two men. As there was no other brickfield at that time within a radius of quite thirty miles, Naylor had a monopoly, and so shrewd and keen did he prove himself to be in business transactions, and so punctilious in keeping his engagements, that people said his bricks were turning to gold. But his great opportunity did not come until four years later, when a wealthy London Trades Guild decided to build in this neighbourhood, owing to its salubrity, a very large Orphan Asylum, and Mr. James Naylor received the contract to supply the whole of the bricks and tiles necessary for the work. A little while before this he had begun to make tiles, the clay being peculiarly suitable for them. As he was still the only manufacturer within thirty miles, he was enabled to get an excellent price for his goods. And the number of his workpeople, which had been gradually increased, now reached a hundred, including his own son, who was then between fourteen and fifteen. He was placed in the office as a sort of under clerk, but, though he inherited some of his father's taciturnity, he did not seem disposed to follow in his father's footsteps, as he showed a preference for idleness and loafing about.

It is necessary to state that at this period of his career Mr. Naylor had become a widower, his wife having died suddenly in a fit about eighteen months before. And now, much to the surprise of every one, and to the heart-breaking disappointment of some of the village belles, who looked upon him as a most eligible partner for life, he made it known that he was going to marry again, his choice being a young woman who had been a chambermaid in Lord B——n's family, who resided in a magnificent old mansion ten miles

from the village. His lordship took great interest in Naylor, and not only gave his wife a very handsome present on the occasion of her marriage, but advanced him a large sum of money to enable him to increase his plant, and erect new and improved machinery.

This development of his business brought Naylor increased prosperity, and as time went on children were born to him—three daughters and a son—and Naylor was, as far as people could judge, a happy and contented man. It was a matter of common talk, however, in the village that he and his illegitimate son did not get on well together. The youth had been christened Robert; and, though he was taciturn and in certain respects moody, he was disposed to run wild, and, though under twenty years of age, he gave way occasionally to drinking habits. Those who were in a position to form an opinion said that this preyed very much on James Naylor's mind, for he had given evidence that he was strongly attached to his wayward son. At last the climax was reached, when young 'Bob' Naylor committed a brutal assault on a man with whom he had been drinking in a public-house. The two of them quarrelled, and Bob struck his companion over the head with a pewter pot, felling him to the ground. Not content with that, he kicked him severely, fracturing one of his ribs, and inflicting several wounds on the poor man's face and body. For this outrage Bob was brought before the Justice of the Peace; and, though he pleaded drunkenness as an excuse, it was felt that some exemplary punishment should be meted out. Nevertheless, the magistrate, out of respect for James Naylor, hesitated to send the lad to prison, and actually remanded him, letting him free on his father's bail, while he took counsel with his

brother magistrates. But Naylor himself expressed a wish that no leniency should be shown to the youth simply because he was his son, and the end was, as the assaulted man had been seriously injured, Bob was sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment, the majority of the villagers even considering that an exceptionally lenient sentence.

At the expiration of the young man's term of imprisonment he did not return to his father's house, but on the very morning of his release took train to Liverpool, and it was subsequently rumoured in the village that he had shipped on board of some vessel and gone abroad.

It was noted that, after this little and unfortunate incident, James Naylor looked very dejected, and displayed an absent-mindedness that was unusual with him. But in a few months the effects had apparently passed off, and he was himself again. As regarded his business, nothing seemed in the slightest degree to retard its success.

As evidencing Mr. Naylor's shrewdness, it may be mentioned that, when he made his original purchase, there were rumours that an adjoining estate, consisting of some ten or twelve acres with a small farm, was likely to be thrown on the market in the course of time, and Naylor, with far-seeing judgment, got the solicitors who were acting for the owners to give him a written contract that, if it was decided to sell, he should have the first offer at a stated price. The solicitors, knowing how land had been a drug in the market in that region, thought that this was an uncommonly good bargain on their part, as they were sure of a customer immediately they wanted to sell. But they saw the affair from another point of view,

when at last they were compelled to offer the estate for sale. Land had gone up in value very much then, for Naylor had improved the neighbourhood considerably, in conjunction with his patron, Lord B——. They had built a number of handsome villas, and let them to a superior class of tenants; and, as his lordship was one of the directors of the adjacent railway company, he obtained a provisional promise from his co-directors that, when the village was a little more developed, they would ask for powers to construct a loop-line of about sixteen miles, which would embrace this village, and another one about four miles off. The consequence of all this was, land nearly doubled in value, and the solicitors, with the grasp and greed peculiar to their class, tried to get out of their bargain with Naylor, even going to law over it, but, as every one predicted they would do, they lost their case, and were compelled to sell to Naylor at the price originally agreed upon, and he thus more than doubled his holding.

Soon after this he erected for himself a very handsome villa, into which he removed his family on the completion of the house.

Although Mr. Naylor was now a wealthy man, lived in fairly good style, and kept a horse and rather stylish trap for the use of his wife and children, he made no pretensions to be anything but what he was—a labouring man, who by shrewdness, industry, and uprightness, had gained influence and a fortune. He was very greatly respected, and had his ambition led him in that direction, he could have put J.P., if not M.P., after his name, and have got appointed to many positions of trust and responsibility. But he declined all such honours, and contented himself with founding

a working man's building society and savings' bank, making it his hobby, and displaying so much energy, that he soon had a very long list of members, and the society flourished, as everything else seemed to do that Mr. Naylor associated himself with, and, of course, the working men of the neighbourhood were greatly benefited. And so highly were Mr. Naylor's efforts in this direction appreciated that, five years after the founding of the society, a strong desire was expressed in the neighbourhood that some acknowledgment of Naylor's attempt to improve the working classes should be made, and the result was a sum of over a thousand pounds was subscribed for a testimonial, which took the form of a full-length oil painting of himself, a handsome service of plate, and an exceedingly handsome gold chronometer watch, bearing a suitable inscription. There was no doubt Naylor was very proud of these things, for, as he himself modestly said at the presentation dinner, nothing could have afforded him keener gratification than this acknowledgment, on the part of his neighbours and friends, that his humble strivings to be an honest and useful man had not been altogether without results.

Of course, such a man was not likely to make a retrograde movement, and his future career was marked by the same steady application, the same progress, and unswerving fidelity to duty. For some years he almost, but not quite, suspended his brick-making operations, as an opposition had started in the neighbourhood, but Naylor said that they would exhaust their land in five years at the most, and he could afford to wait. He proved a true prophet; and the opposition having ceased business, he commenced

to re-develop his, and broke new ground. Extending his operations in all directions, his business began to assume gigantic proportions, and people predicted that James Naylor, the once bricklayer's labourer, would die a millionaire. They did not, however, see the grim hand of ghastly murder that was hovering over the poor man. Had it not been for this, the predictions might have been fulfilled. Nevertheless, although not a millionaire, he was certainly rich when the grim hand struck him.

Such, then, were the interesting facts in connection with this man, as they were told to me by the Superintendent on that dismal, drizzly night as we drove to the little town. I may mention here that arrangements were then in progress for connecting it with the main line of railway. The bill had passed the House of Commons, the route had been surveyed, and Mr. Naylor had hoped to see the line commenced immediately, for it was a pet scheme of his. He knew, of course, it would benefit himself, but he knew, also, it would benefit the neighbourhood generally, and so he had thrown himself heart and soul into the business. A cruel fate, however, doomed that he should never witness the beginning of the work, for five days previous to this journey of mine James Naylor had been found in one of his brickfields battered, hacked, and crushed out of life. To use the Superintendent's own words, no more horrible or brutal murder had ever been committed in the county. 'Brutal,' in fact, hardly described it—it was savage, fiendish, almost beyond credence.

It can well be understood that a crime of this kind, having regard to the man's career and his position, should produce a fever of excitement, and cause a

sensation unparalleled in the district. His widow and children were plunged into inconsolable grief, for he was a faithful husband, a just and upright father, and this grief, it may be said, was shared by the whole village; and, when it was remembered how greatly Naylor was respected, and how much good he had done, people were amazed that he of all men should have become the victim of murderous passion; and what made the crime more mysterious and incomprehensible was, that it had not been committed for the sake of robbery, because Mr. Naylor's presentation watch was found on the body, together with a sum in cash of over twenty pounds. Revenge, therefore, seemed to have been the motive which had prompted the murderer. One person was suspected—a brick-maker—a sullen, disreputable fellow of powerful build, who had been discharged several times for drunkenness, and taken on again; but at last Mr. Naylor had so lost patience with him, that he vowed he would give him no more work.

‘Although we have made every effort,’ continued the Superintendent, ‘to get some evidence against this man, we have quite failed. Whoever killed Mr. Naylor must have been a powerful man, because a struggle had taken place, and Naylor was possessed of so much strength that he could not have been overcome easily. The man I speak of has all the strength to have done the deed, for he is even more powerful than Naylor was; but, though his clothes have been examined with the greatest care, not a spot of blood could be found upon him. Besides, inquiries leave little doubt that he spent the evening in a public-house, and, two hours after the house closed, he was found sleeping on the high road by a rural constable,

three miles at least from the brickfields. He had not then recovered from the drink he had taken, and when roused up was dazed and stupid. Nevertheless, we still have the fellow in custody, as we got a remand for a week, but my own strong impression is, we shall have to let him go unless something like evidence should crop up. Of course, we have not ceased our efforts in other directions, but I am sorry that we have got no clue. I resolved, therefore, by the advice of the magistrates, to send for you, and we are hopeful that you may be able to unravel the mystery, and bring the criminal to justice.'

'Five days,' I answered, 'have given him a good start, unless, of course, the man you have in custody to-day is the right man. If he is not, I confess it seems to me that the chances of success are decidedly against us.'

'That's precisely my view,' answered the Superintendent despondingly. 'And it strikes me that poor Naylor's death will go unavenged.'

'Is he buried yet?' I inquired.

'No; the funeral takes place to-morrow, so you will be able to see the body. I have the ground where the murder took place carefully boarded over, and everything is precisely as it was when the body was found.'

I complimented my companion on his astuteness in doing this, and having secured a room in the hotel which Naylor himself had built in anticipation of the opening of the new railway, I wished him good night, and promised to set to work as soon as daylight broke.

I passed a somewhat restless night, for my mind was full of the work that lay before me; and when

seven struck I was glad to turn out of bed, although a more dismal, cheerless morning it would be difficult to conceive. All the landscape was cold, grey, and sodden with rain, while a piercing east wind chilled one to the marrow. As there were only a few hours intervening between then and the time when the mortal remains of James Naylor would be for ever hidden from men's sight, I hurried off to his house, as I felt that in some respects it would be an advantage to me to view the body.

I shall not harrow my readers' feelings with details of the sight I gazed upon. It is sufficient to say that the wounds and mutilations were horrible, and they suggested that the murderer had been actuated by some frenzied passion, otherwise why did he batter his victim in such a way? There were at least twenty fearful wounds, and any one of those wounds was sufficient to have caused death.

The Superintendent had in no way exaggerated when he described Naylor as having possessed a splendid physique. Indeed, I do not know that I ever saw a finer man. He had a massive chest, a remarkable muscular development, and great length of arm, which suggested that he must have been able to deliver a sledge-hammer-like blow; and, taking all these points into consideration, the inference was that he had been taken unawares—attacked suddenly and stunned. No other hypothesis would account for so powerful a man being overcome so easily as it seemed was the case.

My next visit was to the medical gentleman who had performed the autopsy, and he told me that his opinion was the first blow had been delivered on the back of the victim's head with some blunt instrument;

that the blow had been such a tremendous one that it had crushed in that of the skull, injuring the brain, and so rendering the poor fellow powerless, although he might have feebly struggled for a few moments. The weapon with which this blow had been struck was, he thought, either a brick or a heavy piece of wood. He was sure that, immediately the blow had been delivered, the victim dropped to the ground like a felled ox, though probably he sprang up again, and made an effort to defend himself. In battering the head, face, and neck of the victim about as the murderer had done, he must have been spurred on by some blind, unreasoning fury. That coincided entirely with my opinion, and it led me to make inquiries whether any one in the community had borne ill-feeling for the deceased. But there seemed to be a very decided consensus of opinion that he was so universally liked that nobody in his sane senses could have borne him a grudge. In fact, the people round about were indignant at the bare suggestion that the murderer was amongst them. They were unanimous in declaring it must have been a stranger.

‘But why a stranger?’ I asked.

‘Ah! that was a matter they were not prepared to answer.’

I pointed out that the stranger’s motive in committing the crime would probably have been robbery; but Naylor’s watch and money had not been touched. I could understand that the criminal might have hesitated about possessing himself of the presentation watch, as it was calculated to prove a most damning piece of evidence against him. But the twenty pounds or over in hard cash was another thing. Surely a man who resorted to the dreadful crime of murder for the

sake of robbery was not likely, unless under peculiar circumstances, to have let twenty pounds go when he might have taken it without increasing in any way the risk he had already run. But, in spite of this argument, the people doggedly stuck to their opinion that a stranger had done the deed.

I have already mentioned that a man was in custody on suspicion of being the murderer. This man's name was Robert Arkwright, and he was locally known as 'Big Bob.' He belonged to the neighbourhood, having been born in the parish; and the worst that people could say about him was that he was a drunken, lazy fellow. He was accounted an exceedingly good worker when he would work, and it was well known that Mr. Naylor had interested himself in Big Bob, trying to reform him, and never refusing to give him work during his periods of sobriety, for it appeared that Bob sometimes 'swore off,' and would not touch drink for three or four weeks. Then he would break out and go on the spree, as it is called, so long as he could get a penny to spend. Although the Superintendent had spoken of Bob as a 'sullen, disreputable fellow,' he had never been known to do anything against the law, and not a soul could be found who had ever heard Bob utter the slightest threat against Mr. Naylor. On the contrary, it was agreed that he always spoke very well of his employer, and he frequently expressed surprise that Naylor put up with him as well as he did.

Of course I had an interview with Bob. He seemed to be greatly affected by the suspicions against him; and when Naylor's death was spoken of, Bob shed unmistakable tears. He was an exceedingly powerful man, and might have overcome Naylor if he had half stunned him by the first blow, but I was of

opinion that Naylor would have been more than a match for him unless partially disabled.

On leaving Bob, I came to the conclusion he was not the murderer. The deductions that led me to this conclusion were partly of a psychological and partly of a physiological nature, and I may here anticipate a little by saying that as no evidence was forthcoming to connect Bob with the crime, he was discharged two days later. So far, then, the crime was involved in mystery, and the long start the murderer had got gave him a very decided advantage, and the possibilities were that, unless he betrayed himself by some act of folly, he might succeed in baffling us. It is necessary now that I should describe with some minuteness the actual scene of the crime. Mr. Naylor's works occupied something like fifteen acres of land, and this land was much cut up by the excavations that had been made for the clay. In one of these excavations a pond had been formed, the water being used for the brickmaking operations. Near this pond a small brick and wood house had been erected, and Mr. Naylor had his office here. From several parts of the field this house was not visible owing to the brick kilns. Nor could it be seen from the high road, which was exactly one hundred yards two feet away, and was separated from Mr. Naylor's land by a wooden railing and a thickset hedge. This road, roughly speaking, ran north and south, but at right angles with it, and going west was a narrow lane that, though not on Mr. Naylor's property, he had acquired by purchase a right-of-way through for his cartage. One part of this lane was within twelve yards of the pond. It was bounded by a hedge and an old railing, and a five-barred gate

gave entrance to the brick fields near the pond. The lane was three-quarters of a mile long, and ended at a farm. Between the door of the house and the office used by Mr. Naylor and the edge of the pond was a space of about thirty-six feet, and it was in this space the crime was committed. Mr. Naylor was in the habit of coming to this office, sometimes in the evening, after the day's operations were over, as he gave a good deal of personal attention to his books, and he could be quiet and secluded here. The little house stood quite by itself, and behind it was a wooden shed used for storing coal. The ground all round was stiff, tenacious clay, that was easily impressed with anything bearing upon it.

Now, the murder had not been committed inside the house, but outside. And this argued that the murderer was acquainted with Naylor's habits, for he was in the habit of locking himself in the cottage when working there, in order, no doubt, to keep out intruders. The windows were protected by iron bars and wooden shutters, and given night-time, and a light inside, anyone outside could see through the chinks of the shutters where they had shrunk and warped.

I could not resist the theory, which seemed fully warranted, that the murderer lay in wait for his victim, for he must have reasoned that, if he broke into the house, Naylor would have time to put himself on the defensive. But when he came forth from the glaring light of his lamp to the pitchy darkness of the night, and not suspecting danger, he would be an easy prey. He always had a bull's-eye lantern with him on dark nights, and this lantern had been found on the ground intact. The space between the

door of the house and the edge of the pond was well-marked with footprints that twisted and turned about and ran one into another, thereby indicating clearly enough that there had been a struggle. The Superintendent had had the forethought to see that this part of the ground was kept intact until it had been thoroughly examined by an expert, and in order to preserve it from the weather, it had been carefully covered over with boards and a piece of tarpaulin.

It was clear enough that Mr. Naylor was leaving his office when he was struck down; because the key had been found in the door and the lock was already turned, but he had not had time to withdraw the key before the first murderous blow was given. The frontage of the house was about forty feet, and between one of the gable ends and the door was a space of ten feet. Anyone hiding behind this gable end might with a spring have pounced upon his victim, and have knocked him down as he was in the act of locking the door. And that that was the course pursued I felt pretty sure by the footprints.

I examined the ground with the greatest care, and found two distinct sets of footmarks. The one had been made by Mr. Naylor's boots, which contained three rows of nails, but the other was the impress of boots that had iron-shod heels and iron plates at the toes, and one of these plates—that on the right boot—had a piece broken out which had left a sort of V shaped gap.

I saw immediately the value and importance of this footprint as a possible clue, and with the utmost care I had a block of clay, containing the best defined imprint of the boot, dug out. It was then conveyed in charge of a constable to the nearest town to an

Italian image moulder, who was requested to make a plaster of Paris cast from the clay, and so well did he do his work that he got an absolutely perfect impression of the boot worn by the murderer, for could there be a doubt that the man who had worn that boot was the man who had done poor Mr. Naylor to death?

In the meantime, I directed my efforts to trying to discover with what weapon the crime had been committed. If that could only be found, it would, as I knew, afford another very important possible clue.

The nature of the wounds on the dead man's body left no room to doubt that they were the result of powerful blows dealt with a blunt instrument—a brick, the medical men suggested, or a bludgeon. On reasoning the matter out I came to the conclusion that something in the nature of a bludgeon was far more likely to have been used than a brick, because a brick would have necessitated the murderer being almost in contact with his victim when he struck the first blow, and raising the brick in both his hands in order to bring it down with the crushing effect which was only too painfully apparent in the dead man's head. Now, although this action might not have occupied more than two seconds of time, it was necessary to presuppose that Naylor was so absorbed as to be altogether unconscious that a man was immediately behind him, if the brick theory was to be accepted. But, as opposed to this, I ascertained, by questioning his family, that he was a cautious man, and knowing, owing to the loneliness of the spot at night, that outrage was possible, he had a habit of throwing the light from his bull's-eye round about the house as he emerged, in order to detect anyone

who might be lurking about. His widow told me that she had sometimes expressed nervousness about him, and he used to assure her that he had no fear, and was all right; and as a precautionary measure he always kept a loaded revolver in his desk at the office, and for the rest he relied on his own personal strength and a stout oak stick that he invariably carried. This stick was found leaning against the portal of the door, where he had evidently placed it while he turned the key in the lock. It was therefore unquestionable that that particular stick was not the weapon that had been used to do the murder with.

Although, as I have already stated, I saw good reason for not believing that a brick had been the instrument of destruction, I examined scores of bricks that were lying about, using a magnifying glass of great power for the purpose, but without any result. The hedges, the adjoining fields, the lane, were all diligently searched, but yielded nothing that would help us.

My attention to these matters was looked upon by the local police as a useless expenditure of time, and it was hinted that I had better try and discover the murderer.

‘That is what I am trying to do,’ was my answer. But one person, who was more blunt of speech than polite, said I was not likely to find him if I did nothing else but examine bricks through a magnifying glass.

To this I ventured to reply that, in my humble opinion, the reason the local people had so signally failed to get any clue to the murderer’s whereabouts was their neglect to search for such signs as he might have left behind him. I reminded them further

that it was said of the great naturalist Cuvier that, if a single bone of an animal was given to him, though he did not know to what animal the bone belonged, he could build up a perfect skeleton representing the defunct animal, so a detective, who was one by instinct, and who knew his business, could oftentimes, if he got a definite clue, build up an accurate theory of a crime that, in many cases, might enable him to track down the criminal.

I found that even the Superintendent was inclined to share the views of his subordinates, and he laid stress upon the fact that he had noticed the footprints in the clay, and had had them carefully covered up, and that some attempt had been made to try and find the weapon that Naylor had been killed with. But he frankly admitted that the attempt had been of a very perfunctory nature, for it was thought more desirable to send men out east, west, north, and south to endeavour to learn if a suspicious-looking man had been seen. I pointed out that, in their eagerness to get signs of the man afar, they had forgotten one very important point, which was that the murder had evidently been well planned by someone whose motive was not robbery. Therefore the murderer would have taken such precautionary measures as might be calculated to ensure his safety after the crime.

The murder had been discovered soon after six o'clock in the morning, when the brickmakers commenced work. But when medical aid was summoned the doctors were positive in their assertions that the deceased had been dead several hours. It will, of course, be asked how it was his family had not missed him. I asked the same question, and was informed

that sometimes when he went to his office like that it was very late when he returned, and by his own particular request no one sat up for him. He would let himself in with a latch-key, and having partaken of his supper, retire to rest without disturbing anyone. Consequently the first intimation of the murder was conveyed to the family by a constable, and up to then they had not been aware that he had not come home as usual.

In trying to fix the approximate time of the murder, I gathered that the victim rarely, if ever, stayed in his office after midnight, and sometimes he left long before that. But let it be assumed that he stayed on that particular night to the outside limit of his usual time—that is to say, he left at twelve o'clock—and a few minutes after that he was a corpse. It followed, therefore, that between then and the discovery of his body six hours had elapsed. That gave the murderer a pretty long start, and if he was a fair walker, he could be a good many miles away from the scene of the crime when daylight broke. Now, twelve miles off was a considerable village, and every morning, Sunday excepted, a train left that station for the south, and it was generally filled with working men going to their work, as it stopped at all the little stations between there and a large town eight miles away. Let it be supposed, therefore, that the murderer had acquainted himself with this fact—and it was probable he had—he could easily have covered the twelve miles, have got into that workmen's train without attracting any attention, and so escaped without leaving a trace behind him.

It is a fact, and I am bound to state it, that the local people had quite overlooked these little proba-

bilities, and they had gone about the highways and the adjoining villages virtually crying out, 'Have you seen a murderer?' whereas a little logic brought to bear would have been sufficient to convince them that the man who planned and carried out that terrible crime was not likely to have run the risk of being captured red-handed by lingering near the scene of his dark deed, always assuming that he did not belong to that district. And there were very many reasons for coming to the conclusion that he did not. But the whole truth of the matter is this—When the police laid hold of 'Big Bob,' they made 'cock sure,' as the saying is, that they had got the man they were seeking, and naturally their vigilance was relaxed to the advantage of the criminal. I honestly confess that there were grounds for suspecting Bob at first, but I assert that that was not a sufficient reason for ceasing to look for some one else who might equally be an object of suspicion.

I saw only too clearly that my only hope of being successful was to get some tangible clue at the spot where the deed was done, and, by following that clue, get on the track of the villain. In the footprint there was such a clue, but I felt that my hands would be considerably strengthened could I discover the weapon that had been used to batter out Mr. Naylor's vitality.

'Have you had the pond dragged?' I asked the Superintendent.

'Oh, no,' he answered, 'I did not think it was of any use doing that. A man was hardly likely to throw a stick or bludgeon into a pond, for wood has the property of floating.'

'It has,' I replied, 'unless, to use an Irishism, that wooden stick or bludgeon was made of iron, but even

a wooden stick will not float if it is tied to a brick, and is there not a possibility that, in this particular instance, the murderer, if he was very anxious to rid himself of his fearful weapon, might, if it was a stick, have attached a brick to it, and have pitched it into the pond?’

The feasibility of this was too apparent to be pooh-poohed, and the Superintendent agreed with me that it would not be a bad thing to drag the pond. We at once set to work to do this, constructing a rough raft for the purpose.

The water was in places twelve feet deep, and owing to the clay, was somewhat the colour of pea-soup. The bottom, too, was soft and slimy, so that it seemed not unlikely our labour would be without fruit.

If I had been of a less sanguine disposition I should very soon have given the business up, or rather if I had been less persevering, but it was so utterly contrary to my nature to give in because my first efforts looked hopeless that I pegged away in spite of certain little sarcasms of some of the local police, who from the very first had been at no pains to conceal the fact that they looked upon me as an intruder, and probably an upstart. A crowd of chawbacons, too, had collected round the pond, and, seeming to think it was an occasion for personal enjoyment and coarse wit, they indulged in chaff at my expense, and made me a butt for their meaningless laughter. All this, however, was to me like water to a duck’s back. It had no more effect. I had my duty to perform, and not laughter, nor coarse jest, nor sarcasm, could turn me from that duty.

At length, after three hours’ work, the very primitive dredger we were using brought up from the ooze a

life-preserver, consisting of a stiff piece of gutta percha about an inch thick, rendered formidable by a round bullet at the end, weighing six or seven ounces, and worked all over with string.

‘Eureka!’ I exclaimed. ‘That is the weapon that killed Mr. Naylor.’

The appearance of the life-preserver seemed to work a change in the feelings of the good people who thought I was wasting time; and even the most lightheaded amongst the crowd of country gawbees who had jeered me changed his tone, and gave vent to his views by saying: ‘I’m blarmed if that theere thing baint th’ bludgeon what knocked Maister Naylor’s brains ower.’

I was strongly of opinion myself that it was the identical weapon which had been used by the murderer, though there was the possibility that it was not. But a minute examination revealed the fact that the loaded end of the weapon was much battered, and still adhering to it were several hairs, which were recognised as similar to the hair of the late Mr. Naylor’s head. The doctors admitted that such a weapon might have produced the wounds which were found on Naylor’s body.

Here, then, I had two important clues; first, the footprint; second, the life-preserver; and they suggested to me two things. The one was, that the boots were such as a tramp or a navvy might wear, and that, therefore, the murderer belonged to the vagrant or the working classes. The other was that he had procured the life-preserver for the express purpose of committing the murder, which was, *à priori*, planned and premeditated. If I was correct in this theory, it followed that the crime had been one of revenge, and robbery had formed no part of the motive. Now, who

was likely to cherish revengeful feeling against Naylor, if it was not some one of the villagers or his workpeople? As regards his workpeople, I found that many had been with him for years, and not one had been in his employ less than six months. All these people bore the reputation of being unusually well-behaved for their class, thanks to the exertions of their employer, who displayed the most lively interest and concern in their welfare. To add to their comfort, he had built a row of excellent cottages, which he let to them at a nominal rent. He had also built a large recreation room, well provided with books, papers, and periodicals. For twopence a week any one of his workpeople was privileged to use this room whenever he liked, and here he could smoke his pipe and be supplied with a limited quantity of wholesome beer at a low price. In fact, by common consent, Mr. Naylor was admitted to have been one of the kindest and most excellent of employers, who was ever trying to teach his employ es habits of prudence, self-respect, and frugality. He also offered a premium every year to the man or woman employed by him who had the most money standing in his or her name in the local savings bank at Christmas. He was, therefore, a friend and benefactor to them all, and the question naturally arose, why should any of these people have wanted to kill their best friend? And, in fact, the most careful inquiries failed to elicit the slightest thing that would have justified a shadow of suspicion against any of them, nor could I learn that any one in the village had ever been heard to threaten Naylor, so that I was forced to the conclusion that the murderer was a stranger, and had come from afar. It would have been mere affectation for me to have said that I was not

dubious about the issue of my investigations, having regard to the time that had elapsed and the mystery that unquestionably surrounded the crime. But let it not be supposed for a moment that I was altogether hopeless. A man who begins a task, no matter what it is, with a feeling that he will not succeed, never does succeed. But I had no such feeling, and I began to weave out a theory as to why the murder had been committed, and where the murderer had gone to afterwards.

Now as to the motive. It seemed to me undoubtedly revenge, unless the crime had been perpetrated by some half or wholly mad person. And the manifest ferocity of the deed suggested the strong probability of frenzy, and I kept that in view. Then as to the way in which the murderer had escaped. I have mentioned that at a distance was a large village, or perhaps I should say a small town, for it had a population of eight thousand. Eight miles from this place was one of the huge hives of industry with a population of three hundred thousand, and a large number of working men who had their employment in the larger town resided in the smaller one. In all directions, taking the scene of the crime as a centre, were plenty of small villages, but no town of any size nearer than the one I speak of. The murderer had displayed so much cunning that I could not think it likely he would run the risk of showing himself in any of these small places, where a stranger would necessarily attract a great deal of attention. So I came to the conclusion that he had gone south to the big manufacturing city, and there I resolved to seek for him, and I mainly relied upon the cast of the footprint to track him down. The cast was perfect in its way. The plastic nature of the clay

of the brickfield rendered it one of the best of mediums for receiving impressions, and had the murderer only thought of that, he would have been more careful. But he overlooked it, and the result was I had got a most excellent model of the sole of his boot. But what made it doubly valuable as a piece of evidence was the V shaped fracture in the toeplate. A hundred men might have worn boots with the toe part of the sole protected by a piece of iron or steel, and impressions taken of these soles would, in a general way, have been so much alike that it would have been difficult to distinguish one from the other, but here was a detail that might be of the highest possible value as a link of evidence, given that that particular boot could be found.

My first inquiries were directed to trying to discover if any one had recently purchased a life-preserver in the town, and, to this end, I caused a circular to be distributed amongst the tradespeople who dealt in such things, and also amongst the pawnbrokers. So thoroughly was this done, with the valuable aid of the local authorities, that not a shop or a pawnbroker was missed, and in about a fortnight's time a man called one day at the head police station to make the following statement:—‘About a month to six weeks before—he could not fix the precise date—a man came into his shop and asked to see some life-preservers.’ This tradesman, whose place of business was in one of the poor quarters of the town, dealt mostly in second-hand things, and his stock in trade was of a very miscellaneous character, ranging from second-hand clothes to brass candlesticks. The customer drew attention on himself because he was so hard to please, and could not find one that was heavy enough

for him. At last he selected one, and paid two-and-sixpence for it. The tradesman described this customer as a thick-set, powerful-looking, middle-aged man, with a remarkably sullen expression of countenance, and striking restlessness of the eyes.

‘Although at the time,’ said the tradesman, ‘I did not attach much importance to the fact of this fellow buying a life-preserver, I did think to myself I should not care to meet him on a dark night in a lonely place.’

He was pictured as being poorly dressed, with a very sulky and scowling face. Although the tradesman had noticed his customer pretty minutely he could not say what sort of boots he had on. Shown the life-preserver, the tradesman instantly recognised it as the one he had sold to the man; and he gave unmistakable evidence of his accuracy, for, scratched with the point of a knife-blade on the extreme end of the weapon—not the loaded end—was the shop-keeper’s private mark, showing what the article had cost him. This mark was in very minute characters, but they were perfectly distinct when examined through a glass.

Here then was a discovery of the very highest importance as bearing on the crime, and it proved pretty conclusively that the criminal purchased his murderous weapon in that town with the premeditated object of slaying Naylor, and having accomplished the fearful deed he had flung the instrument of death into the clay pond, thinking, no doubt, that it would never see the light of day again. Presumably the murderer resided in the town, because it seemed out of accord with commonsense that a stranger should go to that particular place to buy a weapon wherewith to commit a murder. At any rate,

that was my idea; and though I am aware of the danger of attaching too much importance to mere speculative theories, I have generally found by experience that, in arguing on such crimes as that I am dealing with, it is pretty safe to assume that ordinary people follow ordinary rules. Therefore, my assumption was that the man who had been guilty of destroying Mr. Naylor's life had strong personal motives for doing so. That necessitated the inference that he knew Naylor, knew his habits and his movements, and had either been in his employ or had had transactions with him. And if this was correct, what more probable than that he lived in the town?

Acting on the idea, I tried to find out, by searching inquiries at his house, whether Mr. Naylor had business transactions with any particular person or firms in the town. And I learned from his books and papers that he dealt with three or four firms, and with one he had had extensive transactions. The name of this firm was Hooper & Hooper, and they manufactured all the tools and implements used by brickmakers; besides which they were engineers and made pumps, iron pulleys, chains, trolleys, and similar articles used in the brick trade. They were consequently large employers of labour; and it seemed to me not at all an improbable idea that amongst their labourers Naylor's murderer might be found. With a view of putting this to the test, I put myself in communication with Messrs. Hooper & Hooper, and they very readily consented to do all that they possibly could in the way of helping me to elucidate the mystery. They had been well acquainted with the murdered man, who visited them whenever he was in the town. They spoke of him in the very highest terms, as in

fact every one did, and they said, in their opinion, he was a model man, and one of the most generous of employers, therefore his cruel murder was all the more mysterious, seeing that robbery had evidently not been the motive.

Hooper & Hooper employed altogether about a hundred and ninety men and boys, and these were apportioned to the various departments.

On the occasion of my first visit I was shown through the works by a member of the firm, and I directed my attention to scrutinising the various employés, but there was nothing in any one of them that attracted my particular attention, for my scrutiny was necessarily of a cursory character. Moreover, I was particularly anxious to avoid raising their suspicions in any way as to the object of my visit, for, if it became known who I was and what my business was, my object might have been defeated.

The pay day of the firm was on Saturday, between twelve and one, and the mode of payment was as follows: The men passed in single file before a little window with a pigeon hole at the bottom. Behind the window in a small office sat three clerks, one to call out the workman's name, another to check the pay sheet, and the third to place the amount on the shelf at the bottom of the pigeon hole, so that the person entitled to the money lifted it as he passed along the narrow passage formed by a wooden barrier. I asked for, and obtained, permission to be present in this office on one of the pay days, so that I might have a fair view of the face of every man as he passed the small window, which framed the face, as it were, and thus emphasised its most salient features.

If it has not struck the reader already, I may state

that my chief object was to try and discover a face that tallied in any way with the face of the man described by the shopkeeper who had sold the life-preserver. For I went upon the assumption, supported by circumstantial evidence, that the murderer was a working man, that he lived in that town, that he knew Mr. Naylor well, and cherished some spite against him, and that, therefore, it was probable he was in the employ of some house with which Naylor had had dealings; that, by some means for which it is impossible for me then to suggest even the shadow of a feasible theory, Naylor had given offence to this particular man, who, having a ferocious and brutish nature, had resolved to murder him.

It was a bitter winter day as I took up my position in the office, and placed myself in such a way that I could see every face distinctly as it came within the space embraced by the window-frame. The atmosphere outside was thick with fog, and a chilling, depressing gloom prevailed everywhere, and was not dispersed by the gas that it was necessary to burn.

One by one the grimy faces passed the window, presenting to my keen and anxious gaze a series of living portraits. I was conscious that the situation was a strange and highly dramatic one, capable of being turned to good account by a novelist or dramatist.

Suddenly a face appeared at the window that immediately riveted my attention, for it came near realising the mental picture I had drawn of the man described to me by the shopkeeper as the person who had bought the life-preserver. It was a sullen, brooding face, with restless eyes, that had in them a latent fierceness. This man had appeared in answer

to the call of 'William Chadwick,' and his face impressed itself so deeply upon me that I could not dismiss it even after its owner had passed out of my range of vision.

When the business of paying was over, I made some inquiries with regard to William Chadwick, and was informed that he had only been four months in the firm's employ. His position was that of a labourer in the chain department, his wages twenty-five shillings a week. Beyond that the firm knew absolutely nothing about him. He came and went, did his work, received his money, and there the connection between him and his employers ended. There was sufficient in these little details, coupled with a facial resemblance he bore to the man who purchased the life-preserver, to arouse my keen interest, and I set about finding out more about him. Amongst his fellow-workmen he was regarded as a very quiet man, who never talked about himself. He was considered to be exceedingly passionate when excited, and from the fact that his arms, hands, and breast were much tattooed, it was thought that he had been a seafaring man. He was very reticent, however, about his past history, but he had stated that he came from Liverpool. I inquired upon what grounds he was considered to be passionate, and the following incident was related in evidence thereof:—

One day a piece of iron fell upon his foot, and he was so enraged thereby that he seemed to become a madman, and, seizing a sledge-hammer out of the hand of a fellow-workman, he smashed the piece of iron into fragments, snorting and foaming with his uncontrollable rage.

This characteristic fitted in with my theory of the

murderer. The ferocity displayed spoke of just such a disposition, and my interest in William Chadwick increased.

Of course I had no difficulty in discovering where he lived, and I found that he was a lodger, occupying a room in the house of a man named Bradburn, who was a night watchman in a large foundry. Bradburn had a family of eight, including his wife, and five of the children—two girls and three boys—went out to daily labour. With this family Chadwick had lodged ever since he came to the town, and he was regarded as a very quiet but somewhat eccentric man. The room he occupied was a back bed-room, and when in the house he usually kept to his room, though occasionally he joined the young men in the kitchen, and smoked with them, for he was a great smoker.

So far, then, although Chadwick answered in some respects to the description of the person who had bought the life-preserver, I had not a scrap of evidence against him such as would have justified his arrest on suspicion. My next move, therefore, was to take Bradburn into my confidence, and get his permission to allow me to make an examination of Chadwick's room. This permission was readily accorded, and, as the lodger and most of the family were out all day, there was no difficulty in the way.

My first attention was directed to trying to find out if Chadwick possessed a pair of boots that would have done for the model of the plaster cast I had. And in this connection another suspicious element cropped up. Four weeks previous to this—that is, just after the date of the murder—Chadwick bought a new pair of boots, agreeing to pay eighteenpence a week for them, at a shop where Bradburn and his family dealt.

But what was, perhaps, still more suspicious, he wore his Sunday clothes for a day or two about the same date; and then he asked Bradburn to introduce him to a shop where he could get a suit of work-clothes on credit. This was done, and he provided himself with an entirely new rig-out. This was certainly a significant incident, and I began to think that the signs were thickening, and that the finger of Nemesis was pointing unmistakably to Chadwick as the slayer of Mr. Naylor.

My first inspection of his room did not lead to any discovery. It was a pretty large room, containing an iron bedstead, a washstand, a dressing-table, a chest of drawers, two or three chairs, and some odds and ends. The floor was partially covered with pieces of carpet, and the house being old the boards were uneven. A second inspection led me to note that in one part of the room it seemed that a couple of boards had recently been disturbed, and this induced me to make a closer examination, and I found that the boards would easily lift up; and, deeming it probable that the space between the floor and the ceiling of the room beneath might have been utilised as a secret hiding-place, I procured a candle, and was enabled to discern some dark object lying on the laths. I had soon drawn it out. It proved to be a boot—a heavy lace-up boot, with an iron shod heel, and a plate at the toe. The plate was perfect—that is, it had no chip like a V in it; but it was a left boot, and my cast represented the boot of the right foot. With almost feverish excitement I searched the space again, and lo, and behold! the other boot was there, and the plate on the sole had a piece broken away that corresponded exactly with my plaster cast. Both these

boots were stiff with having been sodden with wet, and they were covered with mud and stains. I had now no longer any doubt that I had run the murderer down; but, before proceeding to arrest him, I had the boots carefully examined by an analytical chemist, who expressed a strong opinion that the stains on the leather were stains of blood. They seemed, in fact, to have been soaked with it, for some of it had got into the lining inside. The dirt that still adhered in lumps to the hollows beneath the heels was pronounced to have particles of clay amongst it.

My course now was clear, and I lost no time in arresting Chadwick. In order to avoid a scene at the house where he lodged, I arrested him as he was leaving his work. At first he seemed staggered; he grew pale, and a wild, fierce light came into his eyes. But with an effort he controlled himself, and, smiling cynically, he said—‘It’s easy enough to arrest a chap for murder, but you’ve got to prove it against him.’

‘I expect to be able to do that,’ I answered.

Having got him safely secured, I directed my efforts to trying to find the clothes that he had worn with the boots, but in this I was unsuccessful. He had probably destroyed them; but why he had not destroyed the boots was remarkable.

His first examination before the magistrate led to a remand, and during the interval I found out that, on the night of the murder, he was not at home, and I could find nobody who could say they had seen him. The man who had sold the life-preserver was brought forward to identify the prisoner, and, though he would not swear to it positively, he asserted that, to the best of his belief, Chadwick was the man to whom

he had sold the weapon. Some of the clay still adhering to the soles of the boots was contrasted with a sample brought from the scene of the crime, and was found to be identical. The sole of the right boot fitted the plaster cast accurately, so that there could be no reasonable doubt that it was that boot which had made the imprint in the clay, and the man who had worn the boot was Mr. Naylor's murderer. Chadwick denied that he was the owner of the boots I had found, but Bradburn and members of his family identified the boots as having been worn by the lodger. The consequence was, William Chadwick was committed for trial at the assizes, and in the meantime efforts were made to strengthen the evidence. We learned that Chadwick had lived in Liverpool under the name of John Mellor, and had worked as a labourer about the docks, and it was understood by those who knew him that he had been a sailor, and sailed in almost every sea.

Very little further evidence was forthcoming, but it was felt that the circumstance of the footprint was in itself so powerful that it was strong enough to hang the prisoner. In the meantime Chadwick preserved an extraordinary and sullen silence. He absolutely declined to give any account of himself, or say whether he had any relatives, and not a single soul came forward to claim relationship with him. As he had no means for his defence, counsel was appointed; but he said that he didn't want counsel—that he had nothing to tell him, and he didn't care whether he was hanged or not. When he was brought up for trial, it was noted that an extraordinary look of melancholy had settled on his face. He seemed utterly indifferent, and to be entirely absorbed within

himself, as if he took not the slightest interest in anything.

With the exception of the two young children, every member of the Bradburn family swore that the boots had been worn by Chadwick; and the man who sold the life-preserver was almost positive Chadwick was the man who bought it, although he would not swear to it. The prisoner's absence from the town on the night of the murder was placed beyond doubt, and it was also proved that he returned to his lodgings about six o'clock in the morning, and immediately after went to his work with his Sunday clothes on.

The case for the prosecution was considered clearly established; but, as the defence was insanity, and in view of the prisoner's strange behaviour since his arrest, it weighed with the jury, and the verdict was one of wilful murder, coupled with a strong recommendation to mercy on the ground that the prisoner seemed to be subject to aberrations of intellect.

Two days after his condemnation, Chadwick startled the world by not only confessing to the murder, but adding to the confession that the murdered man was his father, he (the prisoner) being an illegitimate son. He averred that he had taken a great dislike to his father from an early age, as he thought he did not treat him well. After his conviction for the assault he committed on a man in a public-house, and of which mention has been made in the early part of this narrative, he made a solemn vow that, if ever he got the chance, he would kill Naylor. On his release from prison he went to Liverpool, and shipped as an apprentice on board a Black Ball liner, and he continued to go to sea for many years. During all these years his

hatred for his father never lessened, and, learning that Naylor was prosperous, he got employment with Hooper and Hooper, so that he might know something of his father's movements; and on several occasions he went down to the village at night, and, finding that Mr. Naylor was in the habit of going to his office in the brickfield at night time, he resolved to cut his career short in the very midst of his prosperity. He was actuated solely by a revengeful feeling, and scorned to touch a penny of the dead man's money. The murder was carried out much in the way that I conjectured. The criminal lay in wait, and struck his victim down the moment he came from the office. After the first blow Naylor did spring up, and struggled a little with his assailant, but he soon grew faint from the effects of the first blow, and was speedily rendered utterly unconscious. After the crime Chadwick tramped to the nearest station, and on getting back to his own place, he found that his clothes had been literally drenched with blood, and he resolved to destroy them, and, pending the opportunity to do that, he hid them underneath the floor, together with his boots. He subsequently took the bundle of clothes, entirely forgetting the boots, and cast them in a lime-kiln in the suburbs. That forgetfulness about the boots was the means of his undoing, and was as remarkable a circumstance as ever I remember in connection with a murder case. But for those boots the criminal would never have been convicted.

Such was the story of this foul, unnatural crime, but it not only served to strengthen the feeling that the murderer, if not actually mad, as understood, was a brooding, melancholy monomaniac, and ought not to be hanged, so the jury's recommendation was allowed

to take effect, and the death sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life. The wretched man's life, however, was destined to be a short one. Periodically violent fits of frenzy seized him, and on one of these occasions congestion of the brain supervened, and killed him three years after his conviction.

THE STORY OF A DARING DEED.

THAT the commission of crime requires a certain amount of boldness and daring goes without saying, although in some cases, perhaps, crime is the result of a terrible and desperate despair, and does not indicate any of the qualities of true courage. In fact, it may be argued, and with a fair show of reason, that criminals are, as a rule, cowards of the worst kind. In a sense this is correct, for cruelty and cowardice are almost inseparable, and criminals are, generally speaking, invariably cruel. But I have known men of the criminal classes display such an amount of sterling courage and indifference to suffering and death, that one could but regret it had not been exercised in a different and worthier cause.

These remarks are suggested by a curious case with which I had something to do years ago. It was during the time I was attached to the Glasgow staff, and the season was winter. Some weeks previously a burglary had been committed at a house situated near Hyde Park Gate, London, and several thousand pounds' worth of jewellery and plate had been carried off. The London police had been unable to capture any of the gang, for there was reason to believe it was the work of a gang, and the authorities at Scotland Yard were greatly annoyed, more particularly as the

press had accused the police of 'stupidity,' 'laxity of duty,' 'pig-headedness,' and all the rest of it. The fact is, public indignation had been aroused by a series of very daring burglaries in the Metropolis, supposed to have been committed by the same gang as those who had succeeded in carrying off such a large amount of swag from the Hyde Park house. These robberies had been planned so skilfully, and carried out so boldly, that the police had been quite baffled, more particularly as the criminals had not confined their operations to any particular locality. One night they worked in the north, then in the south, the next in the west, and so on—even the East End coming in for a share of their attention. The result was, the authorities did not know where to look for them next, for the rascals showed no partiality for any particular locality. The leader of these clever housebreakers was said to be a very notorious character, who was known amongst his kind as 'Leary Dan,' but whose real name was Daniel Wray. This man had already served several long terms of imprisonment—in fact, the larger portion of his life had been passed in prison, for his antecedents were of the worst possible kind. His family for generations had been criminals. He had inherited the taint, and made his first appearance in a police court at the early age of ten. Leary Dan was described as an extraordinarily powerful man, standing about five feet ten and a-half, with a muscular development that enabled him to accomplish seemingly impossible feats. What rendered him still more dangerous, perhaps, was a certain natural suavity of manner, and a plausibility that were particularly deceptive. He displayed none of those characteristics

which are supposed to be inseparable in some way with the professional ruffian. He was said to have a mild, almost benign, expression of face, with a soft blue eye, and a pleasant, fascinating smile. This was certainly singular, having regard to the fact that he came of a race of criminals, and he was, therefore, interesting as a psychological problem. He bore the reputation, however, of being a daring and fearless man who would stick at nothing, and who would sell his life and liberty very dearly indeed.

Soon after the London robbery to which I have referred, word came through to Glasgow that Leary Dan was supposed to be lurking in that city, and a sharp look-out was to be kept for him. As soon as this information was received, my Chief sent for me, and having given me a full and detailed description of Dan, said—

‘Well now, Donovan, here’s a chance for you to distinguish yourself. If Dan’s in Glasgow, hunt him down, and earn renown for yourself; for it will be a feather in your cap if you can manage to lay this desperado by the heels.’

I need scarcely say these words had their due effect upon me, and I resolved to leave no stone unturned to capture Mr. Leary Dan, if he was really in Glasgow. I was told that he was not a man likely to be easily taken, but the effect of that information was to stimulate me to put forth all my energies, and to make a mental vow that I would capture him if possible. Of course, the first thing was to get on his track. The fellow bore the reputation of being infinitely more cunning than a fox, and capable of assuming so many disguises as to completely baffle his pursuers.

After making every allowance for exaggeration, I

came to the conclusion that Dan was certainly not an ordinary customer, and therefore there might be some difficulty in trapping him. But still this in no way discouraged me. I may, in fact, venture to assert that it had precisely the opposite effect, and it put me on my mettle.

My first step was to visit every haunt of vice in Glasgow, as well as the low lodging-houses, in the hope that I might—to use an Indian hunter's phrase—get on the spoor of my game. But I could find no sign of him. And I began to think that he had not honoured Glasgow with his distinguished presence. Nevertheless I did not relax my vigilance, and, deeming it probable that he might, if in the city at all, have taken up his residence in a hotel, for the well-known habits of the man rendered that probable, I visited most of the hotels—good, bad, and indifferent—but still I failed to get any trace of him.

Need I say that I was bitterly disappointed, and it was but a logical conclusion to come to, that Dan was not in Glasgow. We heard from London, however, that the authorities there had unmistakable evidence that Dan had certainly taken a ticket at Euston Station for Glasgow, and that he as certainly travelled by the train, part of the way at least, for a man who knew him, but who did not know then that he was wanted, had seen him go into the refreshment-room at Rugby. Of course, Dan might have gone on to Glasgow by that train, but probably did not make a stay in the northern city. But the question that suggested itself to my mind was, 'Why did he go to Glasgow at all?' He must have had some inducement. What was the inducement? He probably was acquainted with somebody there, and I saw that if I

could only establish that as a fact, I might succeed in tracking him. Notwithstanding, however, that I made every effort to do this, I quite failed to get the slightest information. Dan's movements and affairs were well kept by his pals and associates, and not a clue was forthcoming at first. One night, however, I paid a professional visit to a very notorious house in a low quarter of Glasgow. This house—long since swept away—had a license to sell drink, the result being that it was patronised by as wicked a lot of wretches, male and female, as could be found in a day's march. In fact, whenever we wanted to lay our hands on any of the fraternity of habitual law-breakers we went to this house, for somehow it had a fascination for the class I allude to, and, though they knew they were likely to be spotted there, they went, notwithstanding the risk.

On this particular night, amongst the visitors was a young woman named Lizzie Graham, but known to her companions as 'Fair-haired Liz.' She was, in spite of dissipation and recklessness, a remarkably well-made and pretty woman, about twenty-five years of age, but with a very bad record. She had suffered various terms of imprisonment, and her associates were of the very worst kind. She was, in short, as pretty and as dangerous a fiend as Glasgow at that time could have produced. I knew her well as one of the 'dangerous classes,' and she knew me, for I had been instrumental on one occasion in 'putting her away' for a whole year for highway robbery.

'Hullo, Dick Donovan!' she exclaimed sneeringly as I entered; 'what lay are you on to-night?'

'Oh, just smelling round, Liz,' I answered; and then suddenly it occurred to me that, if anyone in

the city was likely to know if Leary Dan was there, that person was Liz, so I determined to try and pump her.

‘Well, I hope when you’re smelling round you’ll break your infernal neck, or that some bloke will knife you,’ she remarked savagely.

‘Thank you, Liz,’ I replied; ‘you’re charitable.’

‘Yes; to the likes of you I am.’

‘But you forget, my pretty one, I am the law’s representative, and I only do my duty.’

‘Law be blowed,’ she exclaimed. ‘There should be no law. It’s the law what makes poor devils like us outcasts.’

‘Your logic’s false, and your statement untrue,’ I said. ‘But come, now, to show there’s no ill-will on my part, I will pay for a drink for you.’

‘I don’t want your blooming drink,’ she answered; ‘I can pay for my own. Don’t you believe me? look here.’ As she spoke she pulled from her pocket several pound notes, and flourished them in my face.

‘Oh, you’re in clover,’ I remarked. ‘Have you been cracking some crib, or skinning a mug?’*

‘No—— I hav’nt,’ she answered with a long-drawn sneer; ‘I’ve done better than that.’

‘What have you done, Liz?’

‘You don’t think I’m such a howling flat as to tell you, do you?’

‘No; but maybe I shall find out.’

‘Will you! maybe you won’t. You think yourself mighty clever, but you aint clever enough this time.’

‘Don’t be too sure of that, Lizzie, my lass. I’ve trapped sharper people than you.’

* ‘Skinning a mug,’ robbing an intoxicated man.

‘Yes; and I hope you’ll be trapped some day, and get your blooming neck broken.’

‘How charitable you are, Liz! Now, you know you ought really to be a little more polite,’ I said banteringly, ‘for you don’t know how soon you may be glad enough to ask a favour from me.’

‘Favour from you!’ she shrieked defiantly, and snapping her finger and thumb in my face. ‘Favour from you, Dick! No, old pal, don’t you make any blooming error. I won’t ask any favour from you, and take my tip, old man. You’ll have to cut your wisdom teeth before you have me again. Fact is, I’m going to clear out of this rotten country, where poor folk are no better than rats.’

‘And where are you going to?’ I asked, with a laugh.

‘Wouldn’t you like to know?’ she snarled, like an angry cat.

‘No, I’m not particularly anxious, but I suppose you’ve picked up a pal?’

‘Yes, a fellow that’s worth a dozen like you. He’s one of the proper sort, he is, and all the traps in Glasgow won’t take him.’

‘He *must* be clever, then,’ I said carelessly.

‘He’s that blooming clever that he’s set the whole police in the country at defiance.’

Unwittingly she was betraying herself into my hands, and I made a random shot, remarking with an air of carelessness, and yet fixing my eyes upon her—

‘Well, at the present moment, there is only one man I know who is doing that.’

‘And what’s his name?’ she asked sharply, with, as it seemed to me, a shade of anxiety in her face.

‘Leary Dan,’ I answered.

At the mention of the name I saw her change countenance, and she became confused, although she laughed coarsely and exclaimed—

‘For once, Mr. Dick Donovan, you’re wrong; that aint the bloke I mean.’

‘Ah, well, perhaps I am. But come, are you not going to have this drink at my expense?’

‘Oh, well, since you’re so pressing, I don’t mind. Well, here’s tae you. May you always be outwitted.’

I laughed heartily, and replied that it was possible her wish might be realised, but not probable, and I thought to myself: ‘I’m of opinion, my fine lassie, I’ll outwit you before you’re much older.’

I left soon after this, and somehow I could not help thinking that I had struck a trail, and that Liz would prove an unwilling Delilah and betray Dan Wray into my hands. It was evident that she had made a haul of money from somewhere, and it seemed to me in the highest degree probable that she had taken up with Dan, and he was keeping her in funds out of the proceeds of the robbery in London. I therefore resolved to have her closely watched.

For more than a week all her goings to and fro were noted to me, although she had little idea how she was being shadowed. Of course I tried to find out if she was in direct communication with Leary Dan, but could get no evidence that such was the case. He was so cunning, however, that I was sure he would not openly associate with this woman, but that she knew a good deal about him I was morally certain from the expression of her face when I had mentioned his name to her. Another piece of strong presumptive evidence was that Liz was well supplied with money.

I learned that much, but could not discover the source of supply, but I did not relax my vigilance, and the feeling grew upon me that, through Liz, I should run Leary Dan down, for, if it was true he had come to Glasgow, then, from the known characteristics of the man, he was lying *perdu* somewhere, or assuming some character that for the time being defied the scrutiny of those who were so anxious to discover him. It seemed, however, more likely to me that he was hidden away in some snug retreat known only to a few staunch 'pals,' amongst whom was fair-haired Liz, who certainly would not betray him if she could possibly help it, for, like all habitual criminals, she hated law and order, and all those whose duty it was to uphold the majesty of the law, and she would have done a great deal, and have gone to great lengths, to have cheated the law.

For three weeks I shadowed this woman in a way that she had never been shadowed before, and though I learned nothing definitely, her movements became more suspicious, and proved she had something to conceal, and that her funds were in a flourishing state, for she redeemed many things from pawn, and began to deck herself out in all sorts of gaudy finery, to the envy and jealousy of her less-favoured associates, who, however, would not betray her. During all this time no word had been heard of Leary Dan, although his description had been circulated all over the country, and a smart look-out was being kept. This led me to the positive conclusion that he was in Glasgow; that Liz knew his whereabouts, and as soon as he thought the coast was clear, he would shift his quarters. That my inferences were right received some confirmation from a report that was made to us by the authorities

at Scotland Yard. According to this report, a man had been arrested in London for some minor offence. As he was known to be an associate of Dan's, he had been questioned with a view to try and find out if he was aware of Dan's hiding-place. The fellow, however, it became evident, was ignorant on the subject, but he let fall a remark which was decidedly valuable. He said—

‘Maybe Dan has gone to his gal up in the north.’

Asked what part of the north, he replied that he did not know.

Pressed to state who the girl was, he expressed an equal want of knowledge, but said that Dan had a ‘pal’ who was said to be ‘the rortiest petticoat pal’ in the country.

These statements were embodied in the report sent to us, and an official note was appended to the effect that it was very probable that Dan was consorting with some woman, and that we were to exercise increased vigilance. Of course I was rather pleased at this seeming confirmation of my suspicions, and I became more than ever attentive to ‘Fair-haired Liz,’ though, I need scarcely state, she was all unconscious of my attentions. One thing was very clear to me, as in fact it was to all my colleagues—namely, that Dan was well protected by his pals, and that he must have adopted some clever disguise, otherwise he would have been taken long ago. But I felt very certain that the fellow would be wearied out in the end, for such a man was not likely to remain quiet and inactive for any great length of time.

I noted at last that Liz began to visit her old haunts less frequently; and that she was unusually well up in funds was very apparent, for she decked herself out in

all sorts of finery, and even mounted a watch and chain, which I found she had purchased at a pawnbroker's.

All these little signs were to me very significant, and at great personal inconvenience I closely shadowed the woman with unwearying patience, and this sort of work does indeed want patience. The outside public have but little knowledge of the amount of tireless and persistent watchfulness that has to be exercised by a detective officer who wishes to be successful in his calling. It is this very quality, indeed, which often enables the officer to outwit the criminal, for it is well known that criminals are restless, and strongly opposed to anything like restraint on their movements; and so, although at first they may display caution and patience, they are soon tired out, and betray themselves by some careless act. Knowing this, I was hopeful that, sooner or later, I should lay my hands on the much-wanted Dan, and have the credit of bringing this notorious rogue to justice. I was more than ever convinced that Liz knew of his hiding-place, although she did most certainly succeed in baffling me.

It came to her knowledge at last that she was being watched, for I heard incidentally one night in one of the haunts frequented by the class represented by Liz that she had stated she knew she was being shadowed by 'that blooming duffer, Dick Donovan,' but that he would have 'to cut a mighty lot of high teeth before he copped' her.

I smiled to myself when I heard this, for it was so very womanly, and showed that the caution which she was pleased to think she possessed in a very high degree was, after all, only thin veneer, and would soon wear itself out.

At last, one night, owing to information furnished

me by my assistant Jim, I kept an unusually sharp watch on Liz, and saw her leaving her lodging gaily dressed, and with a large bundle under her arm. Presently she got into a cab, and I felt sure that something was on the tapis, and that, probably, my persistency was about to be rewarded. Following her, I tracked her to the railway station, where she took a ticket by what is known as 'The Irish Train,' for Greenock. This astonished me. What did it mean? I kept my weather eye open to see if she was joined by any one, but it was evident she was alone, and I began to think that, after all, perhaps there had been a mistake made as to Dan being in Glasgow. But I was resolved not to lose Liz's track, and so travelled in the same train to Greenock as she did. I felt sure that I was about to witness a revelation, and when we reached Greenock, Miss Liz employed a porter to carry her bundle, and I followed her to the pier, where the Dublin boat was lying with her steam up, ready to start for the Irish Metropolis. Then it flashed across me that Dan, perhaps, was in Dublin, and Liz was going to join him there. I had so altered and disguised my ordinary appearance that not even the penetrating gaze of Liz could have discovered my identity, and so when the boat cast off her warps and steamed down the river, I was a fellow passenger with Liz, but little did I dream that that fact was to be productive of one of the most extraordinary and daring deeds that the annals of crime can furnish.

Although it was winter time, the night was unusually fine, though cold. There was an utter absence of wind, and a young moon shone from a sky that was picturesque with ragged masses of fleecy clouds. There were not many passengers by the steamer, and the

second-class were considerably in excess of the first-class. In fact, including myself, there were only five saloon passengers, while in the second-class there were fifteen at least. Liz travelled second, and as soon as she got on board, she went down below. I noted that she was very well clad, and was warmly wrapped up in a soft woollen shawl of grey lambs' wool. She really looked a most attractive young woman, and if her voice had been less raspy and harsh, and her language more polished and less interspersed with slang, she might have passed for a modest and refined young woman. But in that case she would have been doubly and trebly dangerous so far as men were concerned. When she spoke, however, it was impossible for her not to betray her coarseness, and that was a warning signal, as it were, to those who had their wits about them.

As we steamed out to sea, I walked up and down the deck dreaming dreams as I inhaled the smoke of a choice cigar, and I naturally speculated on what the result of this journey would be. It was evident that Liz had some mission, else why was she going to Dublin? To Dublin she was certainly going, because the boat called nowhere. As it was a fourteen hours' journey, I knew I had her safe for that time, and I could not help a quiet chuckle as I thought that I had outwitted her so far, and how mad and furious she would be if she only knew it. For two hours I kept the deck and smoked, until a sense of weariness stole over me, and I felt that I wanted to sleep. The boat was pursuing her course very steadily. There was no wind, and the heavy black smoke from her funnel hung about like a shroud, and made a great black pall like shadow on the sleeping sea.

I had half expected to have seen Liz on deck, but she had not put in an appearance, and so before turning in for a few hours' rest, I thought I would go down into the second-class to have a look at Liz if she was still up, which, however, I hardly expected would be the case. My surprise, therefore, was very great to find her seated at the table in company with a man who had the appearance of a cattle-dealer. He was a big, powerful man, with a clean-shaved face and short-cropped hair. He was dressed in moleskin trousers, a short pea jacket buttoned over his breast, while a heavy woollen muffler was wound round his neck. It was impossible to see the whole of his face, as he had a large green eye-shade over both his eyes.

My curiosity and interest were necessarily aroused to find that Liz was not alone, and I began to take stock of her companion. For a moment I asked myself if he was an acquaintance she had made promiscuously since coming on board. They were drinking whisky-and-water; and from their manner to each other, I soon came to the conclusion that they were by no means new chums. They were in close conversation, and talking almost in whispers. Then suddenly it flashed across my mind that this man was 'Leary Dan,' with whom I was burning with anxiety to get in touch. The description, however, that I had of Dan was that he had a thick short beard and whiskers, whereas this fellow's face was clean shaved. Of course that was not of much moment, for I knew how easily a beard could be removed by any one wishing to disguise his identity. The eye-shade so completely hid the upper part of the fellow's face that it was impossible to tell what his features were like. Apart from the short thick beard, Dan's face was described

as being marked by a scar about an inch long over the right eyebrow, and which at times had a very livid appearance. Was it not likely, therefore, that this individual was Dan, and that he wore the eye-shade to screen the scar?

I could not suppress a feeling of excitement as I began to realise how very probable this was. If I was right in my surmises, it was clear that, with the peculiar artfulness so characteristic of the rascal, Dan had slipped out of Glasgow in spite of my vigilance, and Liz had joined him on board, and they were going to the Irish metropolis, where they hoped to be undisturbed by detectives—for a time, at least. It was necessary, of course, for me to prove whether I was right or wrong. If this man had a scar over the right eye, then his identity would be established, for one might dismiss the possibility of a coincidence, and I was, therefore, resolved to find out if he was so marked. I had not much fear of my own identity being discovered, for my disguise was very complete. The voice was the only thing likely to betray me, for the voice never changes after a certain age, and everyone knows how extremely difficult it is to disguise the voice, and keep up the change for any length of time. I resolved, however, to run the risk of discovery by my voice, with which Liz was, of course, pretty familiar. But still, as she was not suspecting danger, and probably was congratulating herself on the clever manner in which she had faked ‘the blooming duffer, Dick Donovan,’ she might not be attracted by my voice. I, therefore, took my seat at the table, and, in a half drowsy, husky way, as if I had already indulged in alcohol beyond the limits of prudence, I ordered the steward’s boy to bring me

some whisky. I noted that Liz fixed her eyes upon me, and I mumbled out—

‘That’s a fine night, mum.’

‘Yes,’ she answered curtly.

‘We’re getting a splendid crossing.’

‘Yes,’ she answered again.

My drink was brought, and as I put the glass to my lips I said—‘Here’s your health, mum.’ She took no notice of my remark, and after some minutes’ silence, during which I had allowed my chin to fall on my breast, as if sleep was overpowering me, I suddenly started up as eight bells (twelve o’clock) was struck. The bar closed at midnight, so I sang out to the boy—

‘Here, boy, bring me another whisky before you shut up.’ Then turning to Liz and her companion, I asked them if they would join me. Liz refused, but the man answered—

‘Oh, it’s all right. Yes, we’ll have a drink, governor.’

This broke the ice, and I remarked to the man—

‘You’re going over for stock, I suppose?’

‘Yes, I’m a pig-dealer.’

‘Irish pigs are cheap now,’ I said.

‘Are they?’ he answered abstractedly. Then suddenly he asked, ‘Are you in the line?’

‘Well, no.’

‘What’s your business, then?’

‘I’m a traveller.’

‘Do you know Dublin?’

‘Oh yes, fairly well. Do you?’

‘Yes.’

‘Then you’ll know my friend, Larry Murphy?’ I remarked, watching his face while I spoke. Larry Murphy was a pig dealer in a large way of business

in Dublin and Cork, and any one in the same line of business would be sure to know him. I saw certain indications about my companion's mouth which plainly indicated that he was taken off his guard, and he answered somewhat confusedly—

‘Oh, yes, I know him.’

‘He’s a queer little bit of a spalpeen,’ said I. ‘It’s a wonder, what a lot he’s got in his head, seeing how small he is.’

‘Begad, you’re right,’ answered the fellow, with an attempt at a laugh.

Now Larry Murphy was a man who stood over six feet high in his stocking feet, with a development of figure in proportion to his height. But though he was said to have made a lot of money by dealing in pigs, he was an ignoramus, with no knowledge of anything out of his own particular line. My ‘suspect,’ therefore, had betrayed himself by proving that he knew nothing of Murphy.

It seemed to me that Liz began to manifest some impatience and uneasiness, for she nudged the man on the arm, and said—

‘Well, look here, Joe, are you going to sit here all night?’

‘No, old gal. But, don’t be in a hurry. Let’s see if we can get another drink.’

‘Ah, that’s right!’ I exclaimed. ‘Charming as your missis is, we’ll excuse her if she wishes to retire. Eh?’

‘Don’t make no blooming error, old man,’ Liz replied snappishly, and allowing her vulgarity and slanginess to overcome her discretion—‘I aint going without my husband, I can tell you.’

‘Right glad am I to hear that,’ I remarked, ‘for you are so delightful that I prefer that you remain.’

We can't get anything more at the bar, for it's closed, but I've got a flask here containing a drop of prime old Long John. We'll finish it, if you like.'

The woman did not accept my invitation readily, but the man did. I was sure that her suspicions were aroused, and I noted that she occasionally eyed me askance and curiously; nevertheless, this did not give me any concern, for if the man was, as I suspected, Leary Dan, he was trapped as securely as a rat in an iron cage, and, on reaching Dublin, he would go on shore as my prisoner. I drew my flask from my pocket, and served the whisky, and, as we discussed it, I said—

'Have you something wrong with your eyes, governor?'

Before he could reply Liz spoke, and answered—

'Yes, he got cold in them some time ago, and they've always been inflamed since.'

I could hardly suppress a smile at this shallow attempt at deception, for the woman's whole manner and tone betrayed that it was deception. I could no longer doubt now that she was painfully anxious to conceal something, but it was my business, of course, to prove, beyond a doubt, that the man was Leary Dan. That he was a rascal went without saying, otherwise he would not have been in the company of this notorious woman, for it was evident that they were well acquainted with each other. Nevertheless, I wanted still further proof that my suspicions were well founded; so, suddenly jumping up, I reached across the table, for he was sitting on the one side and I on the other, and I exclaimed—

'Let's look at your eyes, for I've got a splendid remedy for inflammation.'

Before he could stop me I had lifted up the shade,

and there, sure enough, was the scar over the right eye. While secretly delighted that I had at last run my man to earth, I kept my composure. Dan himself was furious, and drew back his elbow, doubled his ponderous fist, and seemed inclined to let drive at me. But Liz threw her arms round him, and, betraying her distress in her voice, she said to him pleadingly—

‘Let the bloke alone, dearie. You’ll only get yourself in a mess if you strike him.’

‘Yes, there’s no doubt about that,’ I answered, with a self-satisfied smile, ‘for you see I might strike back, and then your man would find some of his parts missing.’

‘Well, if he couldn’t knock you into smithereens I’d shunt him,’ remarked Liz with a sneer of the greatest contempt.

‘Yes, by ——,’ exclaimed Dan. ‘If you think I can’t, just stand before me for two minutes.’

‘What are you losing your temper about?’ I asked quietly. ‘I only wanted to see your eyes. Perhaps you’re afraid of showing your full face lest you should be nabbed for something you’ve done.’

Dan’s countenance was a study in its mixed expression of rage and fear, and he seemed to be struggling to give vent to his feelings, but Liz interposed, and, linking her arm in his, she drew him away, saying—

‘Come on; don’t stop there, or there’ll be a row. Come to bed, and leave the cad alone. He ain’t worth quarrelling with.’

Dan yielded to her entreaties, but, as he moved away, he said menacingly—

‘I’ll be even with you, old pal, if I get the chance. I shall see you again before I leave the boat.’

‘Yes,’ I answered. ‘You needn’t have the slightest doubt that you’ll see me again.’

I saw that these words brought a look of unmistakable alarm in Liz’s face—a look that plainly said she suspected my calling, although she gave no sign that she knew who I was.

Dan and Liz retired, and I went back to the cabin, but not to sleep. My drowsiness had passed off, and I was too elated with my discovery to think of going to bed. ‘I have my man safe now,’ I thought, ‘and he shall go on shore at Dublin as my prisoner.’ It certainly was a triumph for me, because Liz had so long defied and deceived me. But at last she had played into my hands, and had been outwitted.

In the course of the night I went to the Captain, who was on duty on the bridge, and told him who I was, and what my business was. He told me that the man with the shade over his eyes had come on board two hours before the boat started. It was clear, therefore, that Dan had preceded Liz to Greenock, or he had, perhaps, been staying there, having managed to slip away from Glasgow owing to the hue and cry. The Captain promised me his assistance, and so I went and turned in for a couple of hours, for I was exhausted, and sadly needed rest.

When I awoke the day was dawning, and we were nearing Dublin. With the going down of the moon, a thick, heavy, white mist had spread itself over the sea, and rendered it imperative that our vessel should proceed almost dead slow, while the steam-whistle was kept constantly going. A large and scattered fleet of fishing boats was coming out of the harbour and making for the open sea, and it took us all our time to keep clear of them. Under these circumstances,

the Captain's whole attention was needed for the navigation of his vessel, and he kept to the bridge, while the seamen were all occupied, some in keeping a look-out on all sides, others in getting the warps ready for fastening the vessel as soon as she reached the wharf. I, therefore, resolved to effect Dan's capture without any assistance, and I went down into the second-class.

Dan was asleep on a form, the green shade still pulled well over his eyes, but Liz was walking up and down. She was evidently restless and uncomfortable, and when I made my appearance, I saw a look of alarm come into her face, and I could not help saying with a laugh, 'Well, Liz, how do you feel this morning? You look as charming as ever.'

She fairly staggered, and she grew as pale as a sheet of note-paper. Then, with an oath, she exclaimed—

'I'm not wrong, then. You're Dick Dovovan?'

'Yes, Liz, I am,' I answered, 'and I think you'll admit you're outwitted at last.'

She was dumb for some moments. She looked as fierce and savage as a wild cat at bay, and as if she was going to fly at me. Knowing the dangerous nature of the woman, I kept on the alert, and, moving to the spot where Leary Dan was sleeping in blissful ignorance of my presence, I whipped out a pair of handcuffs, and proceeded to fasten them on his wrists. Then Liz screamed, and sprang at me; and, seizing my hair like a Fury, she began to belabour me about the head with her fists, accompanying her blows with a volley of the foulest language, mingled with curses. I managed to securely handcuff Dan before he fully realised the situation, and sprang to his feet with a

blood-curdling oath. There was only half a dozen other passengers in the steerage at the time, four of them being women, but I called upon the two men, in the name of the law, to assist me. They did not heed my appeal, however, either from amazement or fear. And, as I held Dan securely by the collar, I warded off the virago's blows, and threatened her with imprisonment in Dublin. My threats, however, would have had no weight, probably, had it not been for Dan himself. Finding himself a prisoner, he suddenly gained command of himself, and displayed great coolness and self-possession, and he told Liz to be quiet. At first she did not heed him, then he thundered out—

‘You fool, keep quiet. What good do you think your’re doing now? You’ll only get put in quod, and how will that help me?’

This had an effect, and she desisted, but her wishes for my destruction found vent in language of the strongest possible description. Suddenly Dan leaned towards her as she clung to him as if thinking she could prevent my taking him away, and he whispered something to her that I could not catch, and, deeming it prudent to separate them, I pulled him away, and ordered him to go up the companion way to the deck. Then I took him to the after part of the vessel, and we were followed by Liz, who had dried her tears, and ceased her abuse. The ship was still moving very slowly, for the fog was as thick as ever. Cold and raw as the morning was, Dan was hot and flushed with the exertion he had undergone, and it was easy to read in his face feelings of intense chagrin and bitterness as he realised that, though he had eluded justice for long, the law had proved too much for him at last.

For ten minutes or so he was silent and gloomy. At last he raised his manacled hands, and tore off the eye-shade, saying—

‘It’s no use acting the fool any longer. You’ve fairly trapped me, Dick Donovan, and I wish you joy of it.’

‘Well, I’ve had a pretty long hunt for you, Dan,’ I answered, ‘and I am not a little pleased I’ve succeeded in running you to earth at last.’

‘Ah,’ he grunted, ‘you’ll never do it again, though.’

Liz was sitting on the cabin skylight with her face buried in her hands. Suddenly Dan reeled, and leaned heavily against the rail of the vessel and gasped—

‘Get me a drink—some whisky—I feel ill.’

I could hardly refuse such a request, as he really seemed ill, and I moved towards the companion-way to call the steward. Then with a jerk of his powerful wrists Dan snapped the handcuffs. Liz flew towards him, and, putting his arm round her, the two sprang overboard.

The daring and suddenness of the deed for a moment deprived me of speech; then I glanced over the side, and saw Liz and Dan drifting astern, and gradually disappearing in the fog. I raised an alarm, but before the vessel’s way could be stopped the man and woman had drifted out of sight, and, as we were still a long way from the shore, it was highly probable they had gone to their doom. It certainly was as daring and remarkable an act as the annals of crime could show, and seemed to prove that the man preferred to face death rather than suffer long imprisonment; while the woman, low and brutal as she was, was willing to share his fate, by reason of the strong attachment she had for him.

As soon as it became known that a man and woman had jumped overboard all was confusion on the vessel, and no time was lost in getting a boat clear; but the law relating to boats on passenger vessels was not enforced with the rigour then that it is now, and nearly a quarter of an hour elapsed before a boat was got into the water, and half an hour was spent in a vain and fruitless endeavour to pick up the wretched couple, but not a sign nor a trace of them could be found, and the feeling of all on board was that they had undoubtedly perished. So the boat was hoisted in, the machinery was set in motion again, and the steamer proceeded on her way to the wharf.

I will not attempt to describe what my feelings were. I had for once in my life been cleanly outwitted. I freely admit that; but then the wretched people had paid a terrible penalty for their triumph. I could not think, somehow, that it had been their intention to commit suicide. Probably the man thought he could reach the shore, for he was, no doubt, a good swimmer, otherwise he would not have run such a risk; or, failing the shore, some passing boat might pick him up. *Some passing boat!* As this idea flashed through my mind, I asked whether it was not extremely likely they had been picked up.

We were making our way through a fishing fleet proceeding to sea, and so numerous were these boats that it was in the highest degree probable that the man and woman must have been observed by one or other of them. In fact, when I came to argue the matter out, I could not avoid the conclusion that Dan had calculated upon this chance. It is true it was a desperate chance. But do not desperate diseases require desperate remedies? Dan saw a long term of

penal servitude before him, even if he did not get a lifer, which was probable, seeing how black his record was. Therefore it was worth while to preserve his liberty even at the risk of death. That Liz was ready and willing to share his fate, whatever it might be, only served to prove the strength of her devotion. And devotion to him it must have been, for he had had no chance of discussing the plan with her. There is no doubt that when he hastily whispered to her in the steerage he said enough to put her on the alert. She was evidently quick to gather his meaning, though few words were spoken, and, without the slightest thought as to what might be the consequence, she blindly trusted herself to him, and braved all the dangers of the fog-enshrouded sea.

On reaching Dublin I at once took steps to ascertain what fishing vessels were out that morning, though the task was so full of difficulty, owing to the boats starting from all parts of the coast, that I abandoned it. But, with the concurrence of the authorities, I offered a reward of £10 for any information that would conclusively prove Dan and Liz to be dead or alive.

A few days later we got word from the officer of a revenue cutter that, making for the port on the morning that Dan and Liz jumped overboard, he passed close to a fishing smack heading for sea, so close, in fact, that the two boats narrowly escaped collision. The smack had evidently been stopped, for her mainsail was being hoisted, and she was getting under weigh. But what particularly attracted the attention of the officer and his men was the appearance of a man and woman on the deck of the smack who had evidently been in the water. The officer

intended to inquire what was the matter, but had to rapidly change his course to avoid collision, and the fog in a few moments hid the two boats from each other, and the officer did not think it worth while to delay. He had, however, noted the number of the fisherman on the mainsail, and by this number we were enabled to trace the smack, which proved to be the Calhoun, belonging to Bray. The Calhoun, however, had been out more than a week, and had not returned; but we found that the relations of those on board were not concerned by the prolonged absence, and it was evident they had had 'a tip' given them. On the tenth day the Calhoun came in, and I, in company with two other officers, boarded her, and questioned the crew as to where they had been to. At first they were reluctant to tell, until, by cross-examination, I learned from the skipper that he had been to the coast of France. Questioned why he had been so far, he admitted picking a man and woman out of the water, and they had paid him a large sum to land them on French soil, the man having round his waist a belt containing a considerable amount of money.

This, then, was the solution of the mystery, and it was evidence of Dan's daring, no less than of his cuteness; and, rascal though he was, and bad as Liz was, I could not but feel a certain amount of admiration for his pluck and her devotion. It was a daring deed, and they had won their lives.

Twelve months later Dan turned up in his old haunts in London. He could not resist the fascination they had for him, and one day, being recognised by a London detective, he was promptly pounced upon, and dragged off to prison. Anxious to learn

from his own lips the story of his daring and desperate deed, I visited him in prison, and he told me that on that memorable morning he had resolved to perish rather than be taken, and, being a very powerful swimmer, he had calculated on being able to sustain himself and Liz above water until they were picked up by some passing boat. A hurriedly-spoken word to Liz had put her on the alert, and, without any shrinking from the risk she ran, she joined issues with him. They were in the water half an hour before they were taken on board the fishing vessel. Having a hundred pounds in his possession, he offered fifty to the skipper of the vessel to run him over to the coast of France. The offer was accepted, and they were landed near Brest; but the immersion in the icy water was fatal to Liz, and Dan told me with genuine emotion and tears that on the third day she was seized with violent inflammation of the lungs, and died in the Brest Hospital a week later.

Dan was duly tried for the robbery for which he had been so long wanted, and, being convicted, he was sentenced to penal servitude for life, as he was regarded as an irredeemable criminal. Thus his daring and courageous deed had been fatal to the woman whose strong attachment to him had led her to willingly risk her life with his, and it had not saved him from life-long incarceration in a felon's prison. Truly, it was courage wasted in an unworthy cause.

THE GREAT RUBY ROBBERY.

MOST of my readers will, no doubt, be aware that Hatton Garden, London, is a short thoroughfare that runs north from Holborn, and is distinguished by being almost entirely occupied by two classes of people only—lawyers and dealers in precious stones. The physical law that all matter tends to gravitate towards its kind would seem to be illustrated in a marked manner so far as Hatton Garden is concerned, for the dealers in stones, as well as the lawyers, are for the most part of the Hebrew persuasion. The money value of the business transacted in this short street in the course of a week would appear to be fabulous if put on paper. But the stock in the hands of some of these Jewish gem merchants is often valued at tens of thousands of pounds, and the way in which packets of gems worth many thousands of pounds are carried about during the day would astonish an outsider. Of course such a region of wealth has repeatedly aroused the cupidity of adventurers, and there are stories told of gem robberies in Hatton Garden that would read like wild romances. It is only two or three years ago that the post office in the street was attacked one evening by some members of a gang of ruffians. It was just as the evening mail was being made up, and the rascals knew there would be numerous packets of precious stones. The clerks in charge of the office

were overcome, and the mail-bag rifled, with the result that the thieves obtained a very valuable booty, with which they got clear off.

The case I am about to narrate, however, dates back many years before this post office robbery. In my time one of the best-known firms in the 'Garden' was that of Benjamin Moses and Sons, whose business ramifications extended to all civilised parts of the world. They were Russian Jews of high respectability, and had been established in London for more than a quarter of a century. The firm consisted of the father and three sons, and a nephew of Mr. Moses, senior. This nephew, whose name was Samuel Cohen, had only a nominal interest in the concern, and his position was that of a clerk or bookkeeper. The business was entirely managed by these five people, and they employed no one else, notwithstanding that their transactions were most extensive, and it was said that Moses and his sons were as wealthy as Croesus. Their premises, which consisted of two rooms on the ground-floor of one of the large, old-fashioned houses which abound in the street, were entered from a passage common to the whole building. This passage was reached from the street by four or five steps. Then at the end of the passage was a flight of stairs communicating with the upper stories of the building. In the basement was a suite of rooms, occupied by the caretaker of the premises—a woman named Martin, who lived there with her husband, a blind man, and their daughter, Isabella.

The rooms of Moses and Sons were back and front. The front room was fitted up as an office; the back was where the stock and business books were kept. Each of these rooms communicated with the outer passage by means of a door, but the door of the back

room was always kept securely locked and barred. And the back window, which looked into a small yard, peculiar to some of the old houses in the city of London, was also guarded with iron bars. With this description of the place the reader will understand more clearly what follows.

It chanced, one November, two of the sons were on the Continent travelling on business for the firm, and the third son was ill at home, suffering from a severe cold. It was the middle of the month, and was one of those typical mornings which Londoners often experience in November. The air was thick, like pea-soup; and it was so dark that gas had to be lighted in all the business places. On this very morning Mr. Moses had received from abroad a parcel of magnificent Burmese rubies, valued at about £25,000, and he and his nephew were busy in the back room sorting and counting these gems so as to check the invoice. But about eleven o'clock it became necessary for the nephew to take some diamonds and other stones to a customer in Cornhill, consequently old Mr. Moses was left alone, and went on with his work, putting the rubies into cases preparatory to locking them up in one of the ponderous safes which were set into the wall of the room. While so engaged he heard the bell of the office-door strike, which signified that somebody had entered. The door could not be opened without this alarm-bell sounding. Mr. Moses at once went into the office, closing the communicating-door of the two rooms behind him. He was confronted by a young but exceedingly powerful-looking man, who wore a heavy fur-trimmed coat and a fur cap. He had a thick moustache and a long black beard. He introduced himself by saying he was a

buyer for a large and very well-known West-End firm of jewellers, and he had been sent to purchase a few exceptionally good brilliants to complete a tiara his firm was making for a titled lady in London.

After some little conversation, Mr. Moses turned round to go into the back room to get the stones, when, with one bound, the intruder sprang over the little counter that stood between him and the doorway, threw his arm round Mr. Moses's throat, half strangling him; then clapped a plaster made of pitch, or something equally adhesive, on to the Jew's mouth, and, as the victim struggled desperately to free himself from the vice-like grip in which he was held, the robber struck him over the head with what was supposed to be a knuckle-duster, and stunned him. After that he securely tied his feet together, and his hands behind his back, with some strong cord which he had brought with him. The unfortunate merchant being thus rendered helpless and insensible, the thief entered the back room and carried off the rubies, together with a few diamonds and sapphires that were in a glass dish on the table, and, having secured his booty, he turned out the gas and made tracks.

When Mr. Moses recovered consciousness he was almost suffocated with the plaster over his mouth, and it was utterly impossible for him to cry out, and equally impossible for him to free his hands or feet, for they had been most securely tied. Knowing that, besides the outrage on himself, his place must have been robbed, he suffered agony of mind that was dreadful, and in his desperation he managed to struggle to his feet, but at that moment he evidently fainted and fell down again, for a blank ensued, and he could remember nothing.

When he took his departure the thief locked the door on the outside with a key that he had obviously brought with him, for Mr. Moses always kept his own keys in his pocket. The object in locking the door was, no doubt, to prevent any one who might call from entering, and thus discovering the outrage before the thief had a sufficiently long time to make good his escape. As was subsequently proved, two or three people did call, but, finding the door locked and the place in darkness, they concluded that Mr. Moses was temporarily absent.

It was about half-past twelve when Samuel Cohen returned from his errand to Cornhill, and naturally he was surprised] to find the door locked. But he, also, thought that his uncle had stepped out for a few minutes. Having waited a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, however, he called upon two or three neighbours where it was probable his uncle might have gone, but failing to get any information he grew uneasy, and seeing a policeman coming down the street, he spoke to him, and expressed his fears that something was wrong. Under these circumstances the policeman suggested that it might be advisable to burst the door open, and, acting on this advice, Cohen and the policeman proceeded to effect forcible entry into the premises, the result being they found Mr. Moses on the floor, bound hand and foot, and his mouth gagged with the horrible plaster.

That outrage had been committed was only too obvious; and outrage suggested robbery, which Cohen speedily determined had been of a very serious character. The first thing to do, however, was to free Mr. Moses from the plaster and the bonds; but, even when this was done, it was some time before he could

give any coherent account of the affair, for he was dazed and stupefied. But when a local chemist had dressed the wound in his head and administered some stimulant he was able to detail what had happened; and, as may be imagined, he was in terrible distress of mind at the heavy loss, for he knew only too well that the chances of recovering precious stones were somewhat remote. Such portable property as that, while going into small bulk, was very valuable, and could be easily disposed of.

As soon as Mr. Moses and his nephew recovered from the shock which the affair naturally caused them I was telegraphed for, or, to be correct, word was sent with all speed to the 'Yard,' and I was instructed to look into the matter.

When I arrived in Hatton Garden it was three o'clock, and as the robbery had been committed about half-past eleven, the enterprising gentleman who had gone off with the rubies had got a fairly good start, so that if he knew how to make the best of his opportunities he might succeed in eluding capture, and that he had his wits about him was manifested from the way he had done his work. That he was bold almost to recklessness seemed equally evident, and it was no less evident that he had deliberately planned the robbery, and carried it out in a most systematic manner, although from the fact that some of the rubies were found scattered about the floor it was safe to argue that he had become somewhat flurried and excited in the end, for when the dropped stones were picked up and valued they were proved to be worth about a thousand pounds; and though the fellow had made a most valuable haul as it was he might have had this additional thousand pounds' worth had he remained

cool and collected. However, he probably thought that a thousand or two more or less in such a valuable prize made little difference.

Mr. Moses having recovered from the shock, although the wound in his head pained him, related the story to me with a circumstantiality that left nothing to be desired, and he described his assailant as a man of about eight-and-twenty or thirty, very dark complexioned, with dark, piercing eyes, a full moustache and beard, but Mr. Moses was of opinion that the beard was a false one. Although the thief spoke excellent English, the merchant was sure he was a foreigner, as he detected an accent that he thought betrayed an Italian origin.

Now there were certain circumstances in connection with this case that were very significant and suggestive. That the man had deliberately planned the robbery and outrage was evident to the meanest intelligence, otherwise why did he go prepared with plaster and cord? This argued that he knew he would have to encounter the old man, and render him helpless before he could possess himself of the gems. But it did more than that; it seemed to me to point conclusively to foreknowledge on the part of the thief. By that I mean that he had managed by some means or other to ascertain, first, that there had been a large arrival of rubies; and, secondly, that the old Jew was alone. Had he not been aware of this latter fact he would hardly have ventured on the robbery, for he could not have hoped to succeed had any one else been with Mr. Moses at the time. To overcome one man—and that man an old one—was a comparatively easy matter to a young and vigorous fellow, but to subdue two in the same way was next to impossible.

It was but natural that I should ponder upon this, and ask myself—*How* did the thief gain this knowledge? The reader will see at once how that question was fraught with importance, for, could I get an answer to it, I might be able to get on the track of the robber. I felt morally certain that he had not acted alone, but had had a confederate who had given him the information. Who was the confederate? Did not all the circumstances point to Samuel Cohen as the man? But at that early stage of the inquiry I was hardly justified in giving expression to my suspicions.

I have already mentioned that under the rooms occupied by Mr. Moses the caretaker, Mrs. Martin, and her husband and daughter, lived—that is, they occupied the basement. Their place could be reached from the street by a flight of stone steps going down into an area, and they were also in communication with the house by the back staircase, which came up into the passage I have described. When I had got all the information I could from Mr. Moses, who was almost distracted at the idea of losing so much money as was represented by the stolen rubies, I proceeded to interview Mrs. Martin, and to inquire of her if she had observed any one loitering about. She was an intelligent woman, though a somewhat garrulous one, and I had a difficulty in keeping her to the point. But at last I got from her an emphatic declaration that she had not noticed any one. Her husband was stone blind, and confined to his bed with rheumatism. Their daughter Bella was a good-looking young woman of about four-and-twenty, and was employed, so they informed me, as a checktaker and programme-seller in a West-End theatre.

‘How long have you lived here?’ I asked Mrs. Martin.

‘Close on five year, sir.’

‘And you know Mr. Moses and his sons well?’

‘Oh, yes, sir. They ain’t very liberal gents, ’cause they don’t give me as much at Christmas-time as the other tenants do; but I ain’t got nothink to say again them.’

I did not check her in giving me this gratuitous opinion, for I had an object in questioning her, and thought it better to let her answer in her own way, and when she had finished I said in a casual sort of manner, as though I had no interest in asking—

‘And I suppose you find Mr. Cohen very little more to your mind?’

‘Ah, well now, sir, I wouldn’t quite say that, because, as ’ow, I’ve always found Mr. Cohen a very nice gentleman, and often of a Saturday, when I’ve been a scrubbing the passage and the stairs, which I ’ave to do every week, he’s given me a shilling or a sixpence, saying, as ’ow, it would do to get me and my husband a drop of beer for our Sunday’s dinner.’

‘Had he any particular reason, do you know, for this display of liberality?’ I asked.

‘Not that I know of, ’cept his kind-heartedness, like.’

‘Well, sir,’ put in the blind husband, ‘I think the missus ought to tell you that she caught Cohen some time ago a carrying on a flirtation with our Bella, and she threatened as how she would tell Mr. Moses, and, maybe, the shillings and sixpences have been given to keep her tongue quiet.’

The man spoke with a certain anger and bitterness, as though he did not view Mr. Cohen’s liberality in the same light as his wife did. But now Bella herself

had a say, and she exclaimed pertly, and with an indignant toss of her head—

‘What do you talk such nonsense for, father? It isn’t true that Mr. Cohen flirted with me.’

‘Well, lass, I’m only repeating what your mother told me.’

‘Then mother ought to have had more sense than to tell you any such rubbish.’

‘Now, Bella,’ remarked the mother, ‘you know quite well that I caught you and Mr. Cohen together several times.’

‘And what if you did! Can’t a girl be seen speaking to a gentleman without it’s being thought that he is flirting with her?’

Mrs. Martin was evidently averse to discussing the subject further, for probably she did not wish me to imagine that Cohen’s liberality was due to the cause her husband had suggested. Of course I drew my own conclusions from what I had heard, and those conclusions left me in no doubt that there had been a good deal of flirtation between this pretty girl and Mr. Samuel Cohen, and though I could not determine then whether this might have any bearing on the robbery I felt it was not to be altogether ignored in sifting the pros and cons of this remarkable case.

Miss Isabella Martin was evidently a young woman who—to use a somewhat vulgar, but, nevertheless, an expressive phrase—knew how many beans made five. There was a self-consciousness, and even a certain priggishness, about her that asserted themselves in an unpleasant way. She was pretty, I will even say very pretty, and that fact would, in the eyes of some men, have been sufficient to outweigh any objectionable qualities. But she impressed me with something like

a conviction that she was cunning, artful, and deceitful, and I deemed it not at all improbable that her flirtations with Mr. Cohen were not quite of the venial character she described them to be. Therefore, it followed as a sequence in the line of argument that she might, under proper conditions, be betrayed into making admissions with reference to Mr. Cohen that would be valuable in assisting me to elucidate the mystery of the robbery. But these conditions were not then; and, as I had no object in prolonging my interview with the Martins, I thanked them, and withdrew with a feeling that I had not wasted my time.

It will, of course, be noted that my suspicions were fastening on Mr. Cohen as an accessory to the crime, and my reasons for this were based upon the significant circumstances of the crime, which were that the robbery took place on the very morning that a large consignment of precious stones had arrived, and at the very hour when Cohen was absent. Everything else was, of course, in favour of the thief—the absence of the sons, the dark morning—but if he had not received ‘a tip,’ how did he know that one son was away ill, that the rubies had arrived, and that Cohen was out; therefore, that Mr. Moses was alone and engaged in examining his purchase, and that, therefore, again, the stones would be loose in the stock-room? These were pertinent questions for me to put to myself; and if such a tip as that I suggested was given, who was likely to have given it if not Cohen?

Full of my suspicion, but without wishing at that stage to declare it, I went down to Mr. Moses’s private house that evening—he lived in good style at Richmond—and, in the course of a conversation I had with him, I said incidentally—

‘I presume your nephew had gone out this morning by your request?’

‘Oh, certainly,’ was the answer. ‘I sent him.’

‘He himself didn’t suggest going?’

‘No, of course not.’

I confess that his answers disappointed me. Had they been the other way, they would have seemed to support my suspicion. As it was, they had a tendency to make me think I was in the wrong; and as Mr. Moses had been very emphatic in his ‘No, of course not,’ I did not consider it prudent then to say another word that might cause him to think I suspected the nephew, but I resolved to take other steps to learn more about Mr. Cohen.

In the few hours that had elapsed we had not let the grass grow under our feet, and news of the outrage and robbery had been sent to every principal station in the kingdom, with a brief description of the thief.

For myself, I did not look for a very speedy capture, because the fellow had not only got a good start, and could, by shaving his face—assuming his beard was not false—alter his appearance; but I felt sure, for several reasons, that he had confederates, who would endeavour to cover his retreat, and throw his pursuers off the scent, and that I was not wrong in this surmise seemed to be confirmed by a letter received at the Detective Department, which read as follows:—

‘The fellow what did the job so neatly at Old Moses’s place in Hatton Garden sailed last night from Liverpool in one of the liners for the land of the soaring eagle, and he’ll never come back no more, and the ‘cops’ will never take him. He knowed his book, and has won cleverly.—*One What Admires Pluck.*’

Of course there are plenty of stupid people who are

always ready to write a letter like this under the impression that they are having a joke, but I did not think that this one was to be classed amongst the missives which usually pour in from human donkeys whenever there is an unusual case on hand; and the reason I did not so think was that the writer was not so ignorant as he wished to seem. The writing itself was infinitely better than the generality of such letters that are sent to the police, and the slipshod grammar, I felt pretty sure, had been purposely assumed. Any way, if it served no other purpose, it proved that the race of fools had not died out, for I did not believe the thief had gone to America, but the writer's object was to throw us off the scent. The police, however, are not quite such idiots as this class of people consider them to be.

When a fortnight had passed we were still without any clue to the thief, and Mr. Moses was so affected by his heavy loss that he became alarmingly ill. His sons, on hearing of the robbery, had hurried back to London, and I had several interviews with them, but no information they could give me was of the slightest use in helping me to trace the robber. I drew from them, by leading questions I put to them, that they not only had great confidence in their cousin, but were greatly attached to him. And from other sources where I had pushed my inquiries, I could learn nothing against Cohen. He was a single man, and, though fond of gaiety and enjoyment, he was considered to be very respectable and very upright.

Notwithstanding all this I could not divest myself of the idea that he was an accessory. I have had a habit all my life of sticking with dogged persistency to any conclusion I have come to that seemed to me

warranted by logic, unless, of course, I saw clearly I was in the wrong; but in the present case, although I could not discern much to justify me in saying I was right, I could not, on the other hand, see anything very definite that decided I was wrong. Perhaps this may be regarded as pigheadedness, or crass obtuseness, but every man acts according to his lights, and I had learned from long experience of the ways of evildoers not to be deceived by mere surface appearances. I was not disposed to accept veneering for the solid wood; and, though Mr. Samuel Cohen might turn out to be all that he was represented to be, I was determined to go down a little deeper into his life and mode of living in the exercise of what I considered my duty to the Law, of which I was a humble representative. But little did I dream then that I was to be instrumental in revealing a state of matters that had in them all the elements of a wild romance.

In order to carry out my idea with regard to Mr. Cohen, I made it a special business to have several interviews with him, ostensibly to ask questions having a bearing on the robbery, but in reality that I might study him, and, possibly, by some chance remark on his part, find a justification for suspecting him. But in so far as this was concerned I was not successful, for he proved himself to be remarkably cautious. However, one or two things I did learn that were of advantage to me, and they were that Cohen was a fast young man, fond of fast company, and that he was exceedingly extravagant, while his income was by no means equivalent to his expenditure. Nevertheless, I had to admit that these points were not in themselves so remarkable as to warrant my regarding him as a dishonest man, for thousands

of young men are fast, extravagant, and live beyond their incomes, and yet do not commit any act against the law. So far, then, I could make out nothing against Mr. Cohen, and there were times when I was disposed to admit that I had been following a wrong scent. But still, though other men were engaged on the case, no clue was forthcoming, and I knew that some of the officials were of opinion that the letter which had been received by the Department, signed 'One What Admires Pluck,' was genuine, and that the thief had really got off to America.

This belief did not recommend itself to me at all, for, as I have already explained, the letter, when viewed in the light of experience, did not bear the stamp of genuineness. On the other hand, in spite of the vigilance that had been exercised, in spite of a considerable reward, and in spite of much detective science that had been brought to bear on the case, we had been unable to get the slightest clue to the thief or the stolen property. Mr. Moses and his sons were naturally greatly distressed, and finding that, as every day passed, the chances of recovering the stolen gems rapidly diminished, they decided to offer a reward of £500 for any information that would lead to the arrest of the criminal and the recovery of the property. But even this offer, tempting as it was, had no effect, nor did it tend in any way to induce me to slacken my vigilance. The idea that had fixed itself in my mind with regard to Cohen would not yield, for the more I analysed all the details of the case the more clearly did it seem to me that the thief must have had a confederate who was well acquainted with what was going on in Moses' office on the morning of the robbery, for which everything had been prepared.

Nearly two months passed, and we were as far off a solution of the mystery as ever, when one afternoon towards the end of January I was going along Oxford Street when I saw a gentleman and lady emerge from a well-known restaurant. In the gentleman I at once recognised Samuel Cohen, and, scrutinising his companion narrowly, I was surprised to find she was none other than Isabella Martin, but she was so stylishly dressed that at first I was disposed to think I was wrong. They hailed a cab, and drove away without having seen me, and this little incident set me pondering.

‘How was it,’ I asked, ‘that the young woman, occupying as she did a very humble position in life, could afford to dress in a way that implied a large expenditure of money?’ However, it was not so much that detail that interested me as the fact of her being in company with Cohen. His acquaintance with her, as it appeared from this, was something more than a mere flirtation, and it occurred to me that Miss Martin might, if diplomatically approached, prove a valuable ally, without knowing that she was aiding me.

A little later on the same evening I called upon the young lady’s mother to make some inquiries about the daughter, but the mother told me in bitter sorrow that ‘Bella’ had been away for several weeks. She had had a few words with her father, and had taken herself off without saying where she was going to, and her parents had neither seen her nor heard from her since. I did not deem it prudent to tell the poor distressed mother that I had seen her daughter that very afternoon, under circumstances that seemed to suggest she was flourishing.

My next step was to proceed to the theatre where

Bella was employed, but there I learnt that she had thrown up her situation four weeks ago. These things were in themselves undoubtedly significant, and seemed to suggest to me that I was striking a trail that might lead to important results. Did it not, for instance, seem probable that Miss Isabella Martin had had a share of the plunder, judging from her style of dress, and the fact of her having thrown up her situation at the theatre? Why had she done that? The feasible answer seemed to be because Cohen had liberally supplied her with money, which had not only enabled her to ape the ways of her superiors, as far as dress was concerned, but also to be independent of the salary which her employment brought her in. Anyway, here was a mystery, and I was determined to solve it, and learn as much as possible about the interesting Bella. To that end I made inquiries at the theatre as to her address, but at the outset was foiled, for nobody seemed able to give it, until a woman, who was employed as a cleaner, volunteered the information that the young woman was living with her husband.

‘With her husband!’ I exclaimed.

‘Yes.’

‘But you don’t mean to say she’s married?’

‘Yes, sir, I believe as how she’s married.’

‘To whom is she married?’

‘Well, I believe she married a gent what goes abroad.’

This was news indeed, and seemed to me to strike a key-note.

‘How do you know she’s married?’ I asked.

‘Because me and her was pretty friendly, and her sweetheart used to come about the theatre a good

deal, and she told me that he was agoing to marry her.'

'Going to! How long is that ago?'

'Well, it's some weeks now.'

'Then she's been married recently?'

'Oh, yes; that's why she left the theaytur.'

'Umph, umph,' I muttered, as I began to see daylight as I thought. 'Do you know the name of her husband?'

'I've heerd it, but I can't remember it. It's a furren name.'

'What sort of a man is her husband—I mean in appearance?'

'He's a very dark man.'

'Tall?'

'Well, middling tall.'

'Should you think he was a strong man?'

'Yes, sir, I'm sure he is.'

'Has he a beard?'

'I've never seen him with no beard. He's a young man—a good-looking fellow, with just a moustache.'

As I left my informant, having learnt as much, apparently, as she had to impart, for she could not give me Bella's address, I was somewhat in a quandary—puzzled, in fact; for what I had heard pointed to my being wrong in my suspicions of Cohen; and yet I had seen them together under circumstances that suggested he was sweethearting her. The description I had received of Isabella's husband did not correspond with Cohen's appearance, so that if the information was correct there were two Richmonds in the field, and that rather complicated matters; but I made up my mind to see what I could get out of Cohen in the course of another interview, and, acting

on what I had heard, accordingly, that evening I went down to where he lived, but found him out, and so I wrote asking him to give me an appointment, which he did.

‘You are probably exceedingly desirous, Mr. Cohen,’ I began, ‘that the mystery of this robbery should be cleared up, for, as I understand matters, you are a sufferer—that is, you are a loser—in conjunction with your relatives?’

‘Of course I am,’ he answered, ‘and I would do a great deal to bring the thief to justice.’

‘You do not speak mere words in saying that?’ I asked, with a significant emphasis on my words.

‘What do you mean?’ he demanded angrily.

‘To be perfectly plain, I mean are you sincere when you say you would be glad to bring the thief to justice?’

This question seemed to anger him to such an extent that his dark eyes flashed fire, and his face became scarlet.

‘Do you suppose,’ he exclaimed with strong energy, ‘that I am the thief?’

‘My suppositions and my thoughts are my own,’ I remarked, by no means disturbed by his outburst.

He was almost beside himself, and I thought he was meditating falling upon me and crushing me.

‘By heavens!’ he cried, as he brought his fist down on the table, ‘if you insinuate that I am the thief, I will make you prove your words at whatever cost.’

I smiled at his threat, and answered—

‘I have not said that I suspected you; but there is a good deal of mystery in this case, and I am trying to get to the bottom of it. Now, there is one thing you won’t attempt to deny, and that is you are very familiar with Isabella Martin?’

‘And what if I am?’

‘A good deal, as far as I am concerned. Isabella has left the protection of her father and mother, and is living under your’s.’

‘That is a lie,’ he hissed.

‘You will not deny that you dined with her at a restaurant in Oxford Street last Thursday?’

‘No; I do not deny it.’

‘You will also admit that she wears clothes that are quite out of keeping with her station in life.’

‘Her station in life is that which she likes to make for herself,’ he answered somewhat ambiguously.

‘Granted. But you will not deny that within the last few weeks—that is, since the robbery—her circumstances have changed?’

‘No, I don’t deny it, and I will go so far as to admit that I have bought her clothes, and that she left her situation at the theatre at my suggestion.’

‘Not because she was going to get married, then?’

‘Married!’ he exclaimed with a sarcastic laugh.

‘Yes. Are you not aware that she is married?’

‘No, indeed I am not. If I were, I would throw her up to-morrow.’

‘You are in love with her, then?’

‘I am much attached to her.’

‘Now then, Mr. Cohen, since you make that admission, there is one pointed question I must put to you, and on your answer to it much depends.’

‘What is it?’ he asked sharply.

‘Do you believe sincerely that you have Miss Isabella Martin’s undivided affection?’

He paused before making reply, and looked at me keenly, then said—

‘Yes, undoubtedly I do.’

‘And if you were proved to be in the wrong, what then?’

‘What then! By Abraham, I would kill her.’

The force and fire displayed in this answer pointed to his sincerity; and his tone, manner, and expression of face indicated that he was sincere.

‘Then you don’t think she is playing a double game with you?’

‘No,’ he answered emphatically, ‘indeed I do not.’

‘Will you give me her address?’

‘Certainly,’ and, without hesitation, he told me where she was living.

So far, then, I had gained a point, and I lost no time in proceeding to the address; and I found that the young lady occupied a bedroom and sitting-room, as a single young woman, in a large and respectable house in Kensington. She herself was out, but from inquiries I made I learned that the only caller she had was a gentleman whose name was not known, but whose description tallied with Cohen’s. This seemed to involve matters again, and I felt that there was some deception somewhere, and I resolved to shadow Bella. Very soon my persistency was rewarded. I followed her one day from her lodgings to Hampstead, and saw her meet a man whose appearance answered in every way that described by the woman at the theatre. Here, then, was a discovery, and there could no longer be any doubt that Bella was playing a double game. I saw them enter a house together, and, later on, I called there, and found out that Miss Bella and the dark gentleman were known as Mr. and Mrs. Shernsky.

My next step was to see Cohen again, and ask him if he knew of a Mr. Shernsky, and he gave me the

most positive assurance that he had never heard the name in his life before, and when I told him that Isabella was keeping company with a man of that name, and passing as his wife, he became furious. After a time he calmed down, and then said that he had worshipped the very ground Miss Martin had walked on, but now was disposed to think she had grossly deceived him. He was for rushing off to her at once, but I stopped him by saying he might prevent my discovering the thief if he did anything rashly, and, though evidently overcome with grief, he consented to place himself in my hands.

I quickly decided on a plan to pursue, and that was to see Isabella Martin, which I did without further delay; and, having obtained an interview with her, I went straight to the point without any beating about the bush.

‘You are acquainted with a Mr. Shernsky?’ I began.

At this question she changed colour, and betrayed great confusion as she stammered out a ‘No,’ but then checked herself, and said—

‘Well, I did know a person of that name.’

‘How long ago?’ I asked.

‘Some months,’ she answered with downcast eyes, and evidently feeling very uneasy.

‘Your notions of time, Miss Martin, seem to be vague,’ I remarked. ‘It is but two days ago I saw you enter a house at Hampstead with him.’

For a moment she cast a furtive glance at me; then, covering her face with her hands, she burst into tears, and exclaimed—

‘I don’t know what you mean by playing the spy on me like that. What has it got to do with you whether I know Shernsky or not?’

‘Well, it may have a good deal to do with me, and it is very certain it has much to do with Mr. Samuel Cohen, who believes in you implicitly.’

She threw herself on to a sofa, and continued to sob bitterly. I let her go on for a while, and then I said—

‘It is no use your trying to deceive me, for, depend upon it, whatever the truth is, I shall get it out. Tell me now, who is Shernsky?’

I had to ask her several times before she answered me, and each time I gave more emphasis to my question. At last she sobbed out—

‘He is my husband.’

‘Are you sure?’

‘Yes. It’s true; it’s true; it’s true,’ she repeated hysterically.

‘When were you married?’

‘Two months ago.’

‘Your husband is a foreigner?’

‘Yes. He is a Pole.’

‘Mr. Cohen does not know him?’

‘No, indeed he does not. I have deceived him.’

Then suddenly, with a heart-bursting sob, she threw herself on her knees at my feet, and exclaimed: ‘Oh, I will tell you all; I will tell you all if you will not punish me.’ Then, without giving me time to reply, she told me in substance the following story:—

She had made the acquaintance of Shernsky about six months before at the theatre; and he almost immediately professed great love for her, and in a very short time he acquired over her a most remarkable influence. He had already got to know, according to her statement, that she lived under Moses’s premises, and he proposed to her that they should rob the place, but subsequently he told her that she was to get from

Cohen, who was infatuated with her, all the particulars she could about Moses's business, and he promised to marry her if he could make a good haul. She had acquired so much power over Cohen that she used to ask him questions about the business, and he answered her without suspecting her object. It was thus that she came to know that his firm were to receive a large packet of rubies, and this information she gave to her Polish lover, who thereupon made arrangements to rob the place. It was at first arranged that on the morning of the robbery Isabella was to send a message to Cohen, saying she wished to see him, so as to get him away from the place. But before she could do this, he by a strange chance went out, and she immediately communicated with Shernsky, who was loitering in the street.

Shortly after the robbery Shernsky married her. At first he wanted to back out of that part of the arrangement, but she threatened to denounce him, and under that threat he made her his wife; and he had ever since done nothing but urge her to obtain money from Cohen, who had already supplied her very liberally.

Such was the remarkable confession she made to me, and, placing her in safe hands, I lost no time in going in search of Shernsky, and that night arrested him. Her story was proved to be true in every particular, and I got evidence that left no doubt Shernsky was meditating flight and the abandonment of his wife; but he lingered rather too long, and I was enabled to spoil his little game, much to his amazement. We proved also beyond doubt that he himself wrote the letter which was sent to the police, and also that he was one of a gang of most notorious

thieves, whose operations extended all over Europe. It may be imagined what Cohen's feelings were when he discovered how the pretty Jezebel had deceived him; and, though a terrible lesson for him, it was a salutary one.

As regards the property, we ascertained that the gems were sent abroad soon after the robbery, and we could not recover them; but a sum of money amounting to nearly four thousand pounds was found in Shernsky's possession.

In due course he was tried, and sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. The unhappy Bella was not proved to be legally blameable, and so she escaped, but during her ten years of grass widowhood she, no doubt, had time to reflect that the stepping-stone to happiness is not that of crime.

BREAKING UP A GANG OF DESPERADOES.

DURING one of the darkest, dreariest, and most severe winters that had been known for many years, something that approached very near a panic reigned in London owing to a series of daring burglaries. The expertness and ingenuity with which these robberies were carried out, and a certain similarity in the *modus operandi* pursued, suggested the strong feasibility that an audacious and well-organised gang of rascals were at work. No partiality was shown for any particular district, and the enterprising cracksmen seemed to be ubiquitous. Bolts and bars, apparently, offered no impediment to these gentlemen of the night, while dogs, large and small, that were relied upon by householders to give warning of approaching danger, were in some mysterious manner silenced and killed, as was supposed, with some powerful drug.

It can easily be understood that such a state of matters caused a widespread feeling of alarm, for the frequency of the robberies was really remarkable, and people wrote to the papers making all sorts of complaints, wild charges, and absurd suggestions. One man went so far as to hint that the police had been bribed wholesale by a wealthy syndicate of expert cracksmen in order that these gentlemen might pursue their avocations of the night with impunity. Another

suggested that every householder whose premises were worth robbing should have two ferocious bloodhounds roaming loose in his house at night. A third thought that it would be a good plan to have a battery of pistol barrels heavily loaded with shot, so arranged near the likeliest place of ingress for the thieves that on a door or window being opened a concealed spring and wire should fire the battery and stretch the intruders dead. No less absurd and laughable was the demand of a lady that two or three regiments of cavalry should be used as patrols during the night, owing to the 'utter inefficiency of the police to protect the peaceful citizens of the largest and most heavily-taxed city of the world.'

In some of the outlying districts where robberies had been frequent, notably in Dulwich, Hampstead, Hounslow, Blackheath, the residents formed 'Vigilance Committees,' and patrolled the roads at night, armed with sticks and revolvers. While the diverging points of the compass at which the various places enumerated are situated serve to show how far a-field the burglars roamed, the action of the citizens proved how deep was the alarm that had been spread through the Metropolis. Perhaps it is unnecessary to say that robberies of this kind could only be continued for any length of time in a great city, for it follows, as a matter of course, that, however well such a city may be guarded with police, there must necessarily be some weak points. Perhaps this applies more strongly to London than to any other city, owing to the enormous extent of the outlying suburbs. The reader need scarcely be informed that the system pursued in 'policing' a city is to apportion one policeman to so many thousand inhabitants. Consequently, it does not require much

calculation to determine approximately the area a single guardian of the peace has to keep watch and ward over. It thus follows that an organised gang of determined men, following out some well-defined plan of action, may for a time set the watchers at defiance, and find the weak places in the chain of defence. I was in London at the time, and was one of a number of detectives who received instructions to do everything possible to try and stop the burglaries by capturing the rascals. We had not a doubt in our own minds that we had to deal with an exceedingly expert gang, who had served an apprenticeship to their calling, and that, therefore, our work was cut out. Nevertheless, I, for one at least, was strongly of opinion we should effect a capture. For in every gang, and this applies particularly to criminals, there must be some weak members, who, sooner or later, betray their weakness. In the case of criminals, this takes the form often of stupidity, which leads to clues being obtained. When it became known that active steps were about to be taken by the authorities, and that the services of some of the ablest detectives of the day had been called into requisition, there was a cessation of the burglaries, and the citizens began to breathe more freely. But in the course of two or three weeks—I think it was about the middle of January—London was once more startled by the news of a most extensive burglary and murderous outrage committed at the house of Mr. Thomas Druce Mayland, M.P., the house, a large mansion, being situated in one of the western suburbs. At the time, Mr. Mayland, who was in bad health (he died shortly afterwards), was sojourning in the south of France, together with his wife, two daughters, and a son; and Mr. Mayland's sister—an elderly lady—

had been left in charge of his house. Seven servants slept on the premises, including a butler; and over the stables, which were at the back, and separated from the house by a courtyard, half-a-dozen men slept, including coachman and stablemen. The house was very isolated, stood in a somewhat lonely situation, and was surrounded by about four acres of ground. As it had always been considered that the place offered strong temptation to the enterprising and energetic burglar, every precaution that could be thought of had been taken to render his efforts futile should he at any time decide to attempt to 'crack the crib.' In addition to unusual safeguards being adopted with windows and doors, a large mastiff was allowed the freedom of the lower part of the house at night, and another mastiff was kept chained to a kennel that was placed at the back of the house. Both these dogs were unusually fine specimens of their kind, and were considered to be invaluable as watch-dogs. Nevertheless, both dogs, which were worth a large sum, were killed before they were enabled to give any alarm.

Entrance to the premises had been effected through a conservatory that abutted on the courtyard where the stables were, but so silently and skilfully had this been done that none of the men who slept over the stables were disturbed. When the burglars got into the conservatory they had between them and a small back sitting-room, used chiefly by the servants, an iron-lined door, but this, apparently, offered but small obstacle, for a panel had been cut cleanly and neatly out, and through the opening thus made the burglars got into the room, where they were confronted with a double-locked door that gave access to the entrance

hall. The locks, however, were soon picked, as were other locks on other doors, including what was known as 'the plate-room,' an unusually strong room where the family silver and other valuables were stored. Adjoining this room the butler, a middle-aged, powerful man, slept, and he always kept a loaded gun and a revolver by his bedside, and by one pull of a bell-rope within reach of his hand as he lay in bed he could ring a bell in all the principal rooms of the house. But, notwithstanding these precautions, a ruffian—the door having been opened with skeleton keys—crept stealthily in, removed the weapons, and cut the bell-rope before the butler was disturbed from his sleep. All this seemed to prove that the thieves were well acquainted with the house and its arrangements.

When the butler did awake, owing to some noise, and realised that a man was in his room, he reached out for the bell-rope, but couldn't find it. He then sprang out of bed, but found both pistol and gun were gone, and he immediately precipitated himself on the intruder, whom he would speedily have overcome had others not rushed in to their comrade's rescue; and on the butler uttering a warning shout he was felled and stunned by a tremendous blow with what was supposed to be a life-preserver. His cry, unfortunately, failed to arouse the rest of the household, and the ruffians thus had a clear course, and they made the best use of their time and opportunities. Having effected an entrance into the plate-room, they carried off something like three thousand pounds' worth of silver and jewellery that was kept in a small safe let into the wall, and which they succeeded in opening. Having secured the swag, the cold-blooded

villains did not proceed upstairs, but descended to the kitchen, and obtaining entrance to the wine-cellar, they drank half-a-dozen bottles of old port, three of champagne, and a bottle of sherry, and ate up a sirloin of cooked beef, a loaf of bread, and a bottle of pickles, which they got from the pantry. Having thus refreshed themselves they left the house with the valuables they had secured, taking with them also a solid and massive gold cup that was kept in the drawing-room under a glass shade. The cup was an heirloom, and had been in the family for many generations.

Some time after the ruffians had gone the butler regained consciousness so far as to be able to give an alarm, but the thieves had had a good start, and were clear away. A doctor was at once summoned to attend to the butler, who was found to be suffering from concussion of the brain, and so terrific had been the force of the blow that had felled him that there was a fracture of the skull, and the doctor had the unfortunate man conveyed to the hospital.

In the meantime information had been sent to the nearest police station, and news was at once telegraphed to Scotland Yard, and I received instructions to proceed immediately to Mr. Mayland's house and make inquiries into all the details of the robbery. As may readily be supposed, I found the household in a great state of excitement, and Mr. Mayland's sister was suffering from nervous prostration.

The way in which the burglars had gained entrance to the mansion was obvious enough; but what was not so clear was the way the dogs had been silenced. They were both noble animals, and had been purchased specially with a view to their being house guards. That they had failed in their duty was not

due to any demerits of their own, but to treachery and expertness on the part of the thieves.*

I found that the housebreakers had left behind them a jemmy, a packet of centre bits, a box of silent matches, and a large single blade pocket knife with a massive horn handle, on which the initials 'J. T.' were rudely carved. The first-named articles were not likely to afford a clue, for they were the common stock-in-trade of every burglar; but the knife I regarded with keen interest, for I felt that it was likely to be of value. Indeed, a knife of that kind was not altogether a common article—that is, in a sense, for, though cheap, it was not of the shape and make of those generally used by the lower and working classes, and it struck me as being of foreign manufacture. I therefore regarded this circumstance as strongly in favour of an arrest being made that might have very important results; and so impressed was I with this that I deemed it highly important to keep the finding of the knife to myself, knowing as I did that if the incident was mentioned in the papers it might very materially damage my chances of following up the clue, by putting the rascals on their guard.

The indignation that made itself manifest throughout London when the burglary and outrage became known was very strong, and no wonder, having regard to the number of robberies that had preceded it. Of course, a demand was made on the part of the public that the most strenuous efforts should be put forth to bring the malefactors to justice. That the police were desirous of doing this goes without saying, but

* The way in which the dogs had been silenced and killed was subsequently discovered, but in the interests of justice I do not deem it prudent to make it known.

as they did not possess superhuman powers they could not perform impossibilities. That they had been baffled so far served to show the cunning and organisation, no less than the daring, of the burglars; but it was a moral certainty that the forces of law and order would triumph in the end, for in a great community of civilised people outrage and robbery cannot long run rampant.

Day after day, however, went by, and the days became weeks, and still the burglary at Mr. Mayland's house ranked as an undiscovered crime. During all this time the butler remained in the hospital, at one time his life being despaired of. But he gradually recovered, although it was painfully evident that he would never be the same man again. He was unable to give any account of the affair beyond what I have already recorded—namely, that on being aroused he instinctively felt for the bell-rope and found it gone. He then sprang from the bed to secure the weapons, when he became conscious of 'a shock to the head,' and remembered no more until there was a partial return to consciousness, during which he realised that something was wrong; and, struggling to the door, he raised an alarm. As he could not furnish us with even the roughest description of his assailant, it will be clear to the reader that difficulties of no ordinary kind lay in our way. It was significant, too, that the robberies ceased for the time at any rate, and this seemed to point distinctly to organisation on the part of the thieves, who, becoming alarmed at the hue and cry they had raised, had resolved to remain quiet until the public had once more been lulled into a sense of security, when probably they would go to work again.

During all this time I had pursued an independent course. That is, I had not identified myself with any fixed plan of my colleagues. So far I had not been successful, nor had they. Several arrests had been made, but as nothing could be proved against the suspects they were liberated, and we had to confess ourselves baffled. Speaking for myself, I was by no means discouraged. I had faith in my star, and was quite sanguine that ultimately I should be able to lay my hands on some of the robbers. In accordance with a rule I always made in similar cases I frequented the haunts of the criminal classes, knowing that it was there that clues were most likely to be obtained. At that time, as indeed it does now, Kent Street in the Borough, that is on the south side of London, bore a very evil reputation. Many of its dens—for dens they were—sheltered some of the vilest specimens of humanity of both sexes, and children of tender years were here trained for criminal lives.

Since the robbery at Mr. Mayland's I had frequented Kent Street a good deal, hopeful that I might stumble across something that would put me on the scent of those I was so anxious to capture. One night I entered a public-house, in the bar of which a number of men were drinking. It was a wretched night outside. The air was filled with sleet and the atmosphere was bitterly cold, so that the streets were all but deserted, and the public-houses were driving a roaring trade. Amongst the men I recognised two or three criminals well known to the police. One of them had served several terms of penal servitude, and had only been out of prison about six months. I had attired myself in such a way that I might have been taken for a fellow

exceedingly down on his luck, and ripe for any venture so long as it promised money. As soon as I entered a dozen pair of eyes were cast on me suspiciously and scrutinisingly, for in such a neighbourhood a stranger is instantly spotted. I called for a humble half-pint of 'four half,' and made pretence of having some difficulty in finding in my pockets the necessary penny to pay for it. My entrance had interrupted the conversation that had been going on, but as I stood there, seemingly indifferent to all my surroundings, the talk was resumed, and I soon gathered that the subject was the death of a 'pal's' wife, who was referred to as 'a bloomin' fine 'ooman.' This opinion, however, did not meet with unanimous approval, for one fellow said, with a sneer on his ugly face—

'Well, mates, that ain't my idea. I believe she wasn't all square.'

'How do you mean, Jimmy?' asked another fellow.

'Well, I mean as she would round on any bloke as she didn't happen to like.'

'Look here, old chum,' said the other man, with a smothered menace, and something of a warning in his tone and manner, 'I know'd Jan Thorson's wife well, and I ain't agoin' to hear anything said agen her. I tell yer she was jannock, and many a good turn she done for coves what was in trouble.'

This emphatic utterance found a general echo amongst the company, with the exception of the man who had expressed an opinion that she wasn't 'all square.' But, finding that he was in such a small minority, he simply growled out an iteration of his views, and then held his peace.

This fragment of conversation amongst these ruffians would have possessed no earthly interest

for me had it not been for the name that had been uttered—that is, ‘Jan Thorson.’ It is a Danish name, and it will be noted that the initials, J. T., corresponded with those cut into the horn handle of the knife I had found at Mr. Mayland’s house after the robbery. Of course I did not overlook the fact that there were hundreds of christian and surnames beginning with J and T, but the coincidence in this case was sufficiently remarkable to arrest my attention when taken into consideration with other details, chief of these being the company I was in, and the peculiarity of the name, which I knew to be Danish; and then I suddenly remembered that the knife in my possession seemed to be a foreign made knife. If that was really so it was significant. Wishing to draw the men out, I said, speaking for the first time, and addressing myself to the man whose opinion of Jan Thorson’s wife was at variance with his comrades—

‘That’s a curious name, mate, isn’t it?’

‘What name?’ he asked.

‘Why, the name of the woman you were talking about.’

‘Thorson, you mean?’

‘Yes.’

‘Well, it ain’t a Hinglish name,’ he remarked.

‘Jan’s a——what’s the name of the place where he comes from?’ he asked, appealing to one of his pals.

‘Blowed if I know,’ was the answer. ‘It’s some furrin part.’

‘Was his wife furrin?’ I queried.

‘Not she. She comed from Scotland.’

‘And she’s dead?’

‘Yes. She was a bully sort.’

‘Did she live about here?’ I asked in a seemingly unconcerned way.

‘Well, she lived not a hundred miles from this,’ the man answered cautiously, and then as he looked at me from under his lowering eyebrows he remarked, ‘You don’t doss in this neighbourhood, mate, do you?’

‘No. I’ve shanked it from the country.’

‘And what lay are you on?’

‘Blowed if I mind what it is; I ain’t particular.’

I saw the men exchange glances with each other. Then one of them called for more beer and offered me a drink, and as soon as the fresh supply was consumed they went out, the one who stood the beer saying as he went—

‘Well, so-long old pal, we may be dropping across yer again.’

‘You may,’ I replied with some significance, although they did not seem to notice it. As I had no particular interest in tracking these men I did not follow them. What concerned me more was to try and discover some particulars of Jan Thorson. That he lived somewhere in the neighbourhood was pretty certain, or the death of his wife would hardly have been a subject of conversation in the pothouse; and if his wife was just dead, I did not think there would be much difficulty in learning some particulars, for she must have been buried somewhere, and those who buried her would know where the husband lived. So the following morning I set to work, and, pushing my inquiries in the most likely quarters, I was soon in possession of the information that Mrs. Jan Thorson had died nine days ago, and three days ago had had quite an im-

posing funeral, and was buried in Norwood Cemetery. She had resided with her husband in a court of very evil repute off Kent Street.

My next step was to make the acquaintance of Jan himself, and I ascertained that a favourite haunt of his was the bar-room of a public-house in the Old Kent Road, and thither I betook myself, with the result that in the course of a night or two I found myself in the veritable Jan's company. He was a big and powerful fellow, with a heavy beard, small blue eyes, and a strongly marked face. His general appearance was by no means suggestive of the criminal. He would have passed for a brewer's drayman, a waggoner, or a ploughman, or any kindred calling of that nature, for his burliness and fresh colour were suggestive of an open-air life, with hard manual labour. That his looks were deceptive, however, I had no manner of doubt, or I should not have found him in the company I did find him in, for several of his companions were well known to the police as 'bad characters,' and one was a ticket-of-leave man.

The day before I had submitted the knife found at Mr. Mayland's house to a well-known cutler in Piccadilly, and he had at once pronounced it as being of Danish make. This was very significant, and seemed to me that it could hardly be a coincidence, and I began to think that Jan Thorson had been mixed up with the burglary at Mayland's. I therefore determined to resort to a little ruse, which, I hoped, might bring forth some result that would strengthen my position, and enable me to follow the clue up. The ruse was this. I called for some bread and cheese, and though a table-knife was brought with it, I took out the horn-handled knife from my pocket wherewith

to cut the cheese and bread; and as I was sitting at the same table as Jan, I took good care the knife should not escape his observation, for I placed it on the table now and again so that he could not help but see it, and all the time I watched him narrowly. I saw him at last look steadily at the knife. He was smoking a long pipe, and, removing the pipe from his lips, he leaned forward a little the better to inspect the knife, and I said to myself mentally, 'That fellow owned that knife as sure as I am sitting here.' The expression on his face was one of amazement, and at last he said—

'That is a curious sort of knife you have there, mate. Will you let me see it?'

Although he spoke fairly good English, his foreign accent was very pronounced. Of course I handed him the knife instantly, and watched his face with the keenness of a hawk watching its prey. His face betrayed him. He recognised the knife. The initials were his. He handed it to one of his companions, and they muttered something together. Then, turning to me, he asked—

'Where did you pick up that thing, mate?'

Unless I aroused his suspicions I had no alternative but to make a deliberate misstatement, so I answered curtly—

'Bought it.'

'Where?'

'At a marine store dealer's.'

After a pause, during which he seemed to be pondering the matter in his mind, he said—

'Are you open to trade? I've taken a fancy to that knife.'

'What will you give?' I asked.

‘Two and a kick’ (two and sixpence).

‘It’s a bargain,’ I said, and he handed me the half-crown, and I felt that he had given himself away, and that I was now in a fair way of making a revelation.

This incident of the knife was certainly a most remarkable one, and seemed to border almost on fiction, but real life, as every one knows, is full of startling circumstances, that, viewed casually, tax one’s credulity. But some of the greatest criminals who have ever disgraced the world have been tracked down owing to some slight sign that has led to others, until, link by link, a chain of evidence has been woven that has dragged the guilty person to his doom.

Having got upon the track of Jan Thorson, my plan was to watch him narrowly. I might, of course, have arrested him at once on suspicion; but had I done that I should have made a mistake, for not only would it have been a difficult matter, in all probability, to get evidence against him, but the rest of his associates would have taken alarm, and cleared out. Now, it was an absolute certainty that Jan did not commit the burglary at Mr. Mayland’s single-handed, and it was almost as certain that the other burglaries which had caused such a widespread feeling of uneasiness throughout London had been the work of the same band, and a detective would have been unworthy the name if he had done anything premature which would have prevented him capturing all concerned.

I found that there was nothing known of Jan Thorson in Scotland Yard; but the neighbourhood in which he lived had one of the worst reputations in the Metropolis.

I soon learnt that Jan rented an apartment in the house of a man named Samuel Birket, who ostensibly

followed the occupation of a wharf porter in Bermondsey. But Samuel had done his 'bit,' having suffered six months' imprisonment for assault, and twelve months for having stolen a gold watch from an officer's berth on board of a steamer he was helping to unload at the wharf. Consequently, Mr. Birket had graduated in the school of crime, and was likely to be acquainted with the rogues about him. Since his last conviction, however, he had kept out of trouble. Perhaps it would be better to say that he had managed not to be found out in any evil doing he may have been guilty of, for it wanted a good deal of faith to believe that after being such a sinner he had suddenly become a saint. Indeed, saints are not made out of such stuff as Mr. Samuel Birket was composed of, for he was a great, coarse, hulking fellow, with a hang-dog, murderous expression of face and the money he earned at the wharves he for the most part spent on drink, and it was said that when 'Sammy' was drunk he was a caution to snakes and the terror of the neighbourhood.

Besides Jan Thorson, Samuel had another lodger in the person of an old man who was known as 'Bags,' but whose real name was John Smith. And this gentleman got his living by buying and selling old boots and shoes, umbrellas, hats, and cast-off garments of all kinds. 'Bags' was an old man, upwards of seventy, without, as it seemed, a friend or relative in the world—at any rate, none that he owned to. So much did I learn of Bags, and though possibly he was harmless enough, I could not help thinking that, in all probability, he was not averse to doing a bit of fencing if it came in his way. But the miserable manner in which he eked out his existence showed that his transgressions

in that respect must have been light, unless the miser's greed prompted him, which was not improbable. However, I felt little or no interest in Bags, and have only made a passing reference to him as being a lodger of Mr. Samuel Birket's. My object was to get at the history of Jan Thorson. This much I learned—he claimed to be an engraver by trade, but was out of employment. His wife had followed the calling of a charwoman, and in that capacity it struck me that she might have been of great assistance to her husband by giving him tips as to likely houses to be cracked. However, that was mere surmise. I could obtain no evidence of it.

Such information as I picked up was obtained in a very fragmentary way, and the greatest caution had to be exercised, and my object carefully concealed, for the class of people in that neighbourhood were all more or less tarred with the same brush, and if one had suspected that one of their neighbours was wanted, the news would have spread like wildfire and everything been done to frustrate justice. To use a simile, they were a pack of wolves, and I had to assume the character of a wolf, for if they had thought I was a hunter they would have cleared out. As regards Jan Thorson, his movements were mysterious, and I could not apply for information to either 'Sammy' or 'Bags,' for I felt sure that they were not to be trusted. But there was a Mrs. Sammy; that is, Mr. Samuel Birket had a wife, by no means an attractive lady. She had long passed the prime of life, and her face was strongly marked with drink and vice. She followed the humble occupation of a washerwoman, going out to people's houses whenever she could get a job.

The detective in the interests of justice often has

to make strange allies, and I felt that Mrs. Birket might prove of value; but I was sure from her surroundings and connections she would have to be approached very cautiously, and so I arranged the following little plan. I was acquainted with a young couple who resided at Kennington, which, for the benefit of such of my readers who may not know London, I may state is situated on the south side also, and not two miles from Kent Street; but Kennington is a highly respectable neighbourhood. This couple had not very long been married, and at my request the lady agreed to engage Mrs. Birket to do a day's washing occasionally, and under my pilotage the servant penetrated into the unsalubrious purlieus of Kent Street, and requested Sammy's wife to call on her mistress with a view to an engagement to do the family washing. Mrs. Birket lost no time in starting off for Kennington, with the result that it was arranged she was to go on a certain day, and if she gave satisfaction, she would possibly be offered a job one day in every week.

On the first day that she began her work I was at the house, and managed to get into conversation with Mrs. Birket. She had never, as far as I knew, seen me before in her life, and I won her confidence by making some inquiries as to how she had come by a black eye from which she was suffering, and on her telling me that 'her man' had been 'bashing' her, I expressed disgust, and advised her to give him into custody when he assaulted her again.

'Well,' she exclaimed, 'I should have to do that pretty often, for he gets drunk two or three times a week, and always on a Saturday, and if he gets a chance he always knocks me about.'

I found by careful probing that while she was willing enough to speak of her husband's weakness in this respect, she was by no means inclined to give any other information either about him or their lodgers, so that I began to think that, after all, Mrs. Birket would be of no use as an ally.

The following week she came to the house twice, and I had opportunities of conversing with her, and I found that, under the influences of a 'drop o' gin,' she was disposed to be more communicative, though this went no further than a confession that sometimes she forgot what was due to her womanhood, and indulged a bit too freely, and that then she had a very nagging tongue, and she and her 'old man' not infrequently had a pitched battle.

It suddenly dawned upon me that I might turn this knowledge to account, for if I could manage to arrest Birket on some pretence there was the possibility of my learning something about him and his connection with Jan Thorson. For I went upon the hypothesis that he could not be ignorant of Jan's doings, if Jan was what I suspected him to be.

In pursuance of this idea, I called at the Birket's residence on the following Saturday night without having previously informed the lady of my intention. My acquaintance with her so far served me that she readily admitted me to the house, on my telling her—which was a fact—that my friends wished her to go to Kennington on the Monday to help to clean their house down.

I had purposely made the hour late. It was after ten, and when she asked me to go in she said—

'My Sam's in the kitchen as drunk as a fool, and as quarrelsome as a wild cat.'

She said this by way of an apology, as it were, for taking me into a foetid, squalid, dirty little room, containing a table and chair and very little else. Scarcely had we entered the room when Mr. Birket burst in upon us, and with an oath that was calculated to make one's blood curdle he demanded money from his wife.

He was stupidly intoxicated, and in that condition when a man of his disposition is as dangerous as an uncaged hyena.

'I've no money for you,' she snapped. 'You've boozed all your own away, and you ain't going to have mine.'

This seemed to arouse him to fury, and suddenly he turned on me, and asked who I was. She answered for me.

'He's a gent what's come from some people I work for to tell me to go up on Monday to do some cleaning.'

Apparently this satisfied him so far, and, ignoring my presence, he again demanded money from his wife, which she again refused, and he muttered with another oath—

'I'll take it out of your hide, old woman, before the night's finished.' Then he retired to the kitchen again.

'Does he mean what he says?' I asked.

'Does he!' she exclaimed. 'I should think he does. He'll half murder me if he gets the chance.'

'Why don't you give him in charge?' I said.

'Well, I've often thought of doing that, and I've told him so, too.'

'Don't think about it, but do it. Why should you let a ruffian like that knock you about, though he is your husband?'

‘I’m blowed if I don’t give him in charge,’ she said, ‘if he hits me again; for the fact is, to tell you God’s truth, he ain’t my husband at all.’

This little revelation did not astonish me, and I saw that it was calculated to work in my favour. As I had no further excuse for stopping, but having a sort of intuitive feeling that there would be a row between the man and woman before the night was over, I resolved to see the policeman on the beat and tell him to be on the alert. He was an intelligent man and knew the house well, and told me that never a Saturday passed hardly but what there was a row. And, sure enough, there was a row on this particular Saturday night. It appears that about three quarters of an hour after I had gone the woman left the house with a jug to go and get some beer before the public-house closed. Birket, who had heard her go out, rushed after her and again demanded money, which she again refused. Thereupon he seized the jug and struck her a heavy blow upon the head. Her screams brought the policeman to the spot, and, half-mad with rage, and half-blinded with the blood that streamed over her eyes, she gave Birket into custody. But the ruffian was so violent that it took four policemen to convey him to the station. His arrest was announced to me the first thing on Monday morning, and I went down to the station where he was confined and visited him in his cell. He was a most deplorable object. Pallid as death, with every limb quivering from the effects of his debauch, his matted hair hanging over his brows, and his eyes bleared and bloodshot, he seemed an outrage on God’s creation.

He looked up as I entered, and implored me to give him a drink of beer or he would go mad.

I made this an opportunity for expatiating upon his folly, and pointed out that drink had made a beast of him, and that if it had not been for drink his wife would not have given him in charge.

With an oath he exclaimed—

‘I didn’t think she’d a rounded on me, but I’ll have my revenge for it if she comes agen me this morning.’

A little later he was conveyed to the police court, and, sure enough, the woman did appear against him, for the policeman who had arrested Birket took good care to see that she did come. She was very ill from loss of blood, and so severe had been the wound that she had to be conveyed to the hospital to have it stitched up, and she now appeared in court with her head enveloped in bandages.

When she stepped into the witness-box Birket looked at her ferociously, and for a moment or two she seemed intimidated; but, encouraged by the magistrate, she told her story, which, being corroborated by the policemen, and owing to his former convictions, the magistrate denounced the prisoner as a dangerous ruffian, and sentenced him to two month’s hard labour.

As soon as he was removed to the cells he said he wanted to see a detective, and I was sent for. ‘I told you,’ he said, ‘that if she came agen me I’d make her smart. Her brother’s one of the smartest cracksmen in London, and he’s done a lot of jobs lately.’ He informed me that if I went to a certain house in Southwark, the address of which he gave me, at a particular hour in the evening, I was almost sure to ‘nab the brother and a lot of his pals.’

I was elated at this information, as may well be

imagined, and that night, accompanied by a brother detective and half-a-dozen plain-clothes men, I made a raid on the house indicated, with the result that we arrested a whole gang of thieves, including a Jew receiver. We also discovered in the house an immense quantity of stolen property, consisting of plate, jewellery, watches, furs, carpets, bedding, blankets, rolls of linen, knives and forks, &c. Not for a long time had such a haul been made.

The men were astounded as we burst in upon them, and at first seemed disposed to fight; but, recognising the hopelessness of a struggle—for they did not know but what we had a strong force outside—they allowed themselves to be taken, and, handcuffing them together, we hurried them off to the nearest station, two of our number being left in charge of the house.

The following morning all the goods were removed in a van, and a lot of the property was at once identified as the proceeds of burglaries in Brixton, Clapham, Dulwich, and Hampstead.

Amongst the prisoners was a young man—a mere youth, for he was not more than twenty—and I at once regarded this fellow as a likely subject to turn Queen's evidence, and in the course of a few days I had an opportunity of conversing with him, and strongly urged him to save himself by giving information that would be valuable to the prosecution. After some hesitation he said he would do this, and I then questioned him as to whether he had been concerned in the robbery at Mr. Mayland's house.

'No, I had nothing to do with it,' he answered; 'but I heard my pals talking about it, for it was part of our gang what did it.'

'Do you know a man named Jan Thorson?' I asked.

‘Yes. He’s a foreigner. I don’t know where he comes from, but he’s a boss crib-cracker, and it was he what done the Mayland job.’

I felt now that success complete would crown my efforts to break up this infamous gang, for, besides Thorson, the prisoner gave me the names of a dozen other men, several of whom were returned convicts.

My first attention, however, was given to Jan Thorson; and, armed with a warrant for his arrest, I proceeded to his lodgings, only to find to my chagrin that the bird had flown. He had taken flight as soon as he had heard of the arrest of the others, and deemed it wise to clear out. I did not see Mrs. Birket, for she was in the hospital, erysipelas having supervened to such an extent that her life was in danger. A woman, who said she was Mrs. Birket’s cousin, was looking after the house, and she told me that Thorson had gone away suddenly without saying where he had gone to. But she expressed an opinion that he had gone to Liverpool, because she knew that he had a brother there who kept a shop, and he had sent her to a neighbouring public-house to borrow a railway guide.

On the strength of this information I started for Liverpool as soon as possible, determined to leave no stone unturned to track the fugitive, for I felt that if he escaped the work would not be complete, notwithstanding the numerous arrests we had made and the large amount of property that had been recovered. On arriving at my destination, the first thing I did was to search the directory for the name of Thorson, for Mrs. Birket’s cousin had told me that Jan’s brother kept a shop in Liverpool, but if he did it must have been under another name, for Thorson did

not appear. This was somewhat of a disappointment, and made my task all the more difficult. But without a moment's loss of time I had his description circulated all over the town, and the police were instructed to keep a sharp look-out. I had strong hopes of catching Jan, for he was a very conspicuous and, in some respects, a remarkable man, while his strong foreign accent, which he could not possibly prevent, would be much against him. A reward of ten pounds was offered for his betrayal, and I was hopeful that this would be sufficient inducement for some of the low class people he might associate with to give him up to justice. As I was obliged to return to London in connection with the other arrests, I had to leave the matter in the hands of the Liverpool police, but I felt confident that if Jan Thorson was in Liverpool he would fall into the net that had been spread for him sooner or later. When I got back to town I had the proud satisfaction of learning that I had been the means of bringing to light a most extraordinary conspiracy against society, for other arrests had been made, making thirty altogether; and it was now clear that these desperadoes had banded themselves together to carry out a series of burglaries all over the Metropolis, the proceeds of the robberies to be equally divided. They had actually rented the house in Southwark where the first arrests were made as a warehouse for the stolen goods, and nearly every night the receivers used to go there to pay for and carry off portions of the goods, for in order to avoid bringing suspicion on their movements only a few things were taken at a time. The aggregate value of the things amounted to several thousand pounds, but there was every reason to believe a large quantity had

been disposed of beyond recovery. Several of the gang had already suffered imprisonment, and they were known to be most expert housebreakers, so that the public hailed this wholesale capture with delight. The magistrate had sent all the prisoners for trial, and we were busy getting evidence that would ensure their conviction; for, notwithstanding that they were all guilty in a greater or less degree, it was imperatively necessary to produce such tangible evidence as would satisfy justice. However, there did not seem much likelihood of our failing in this respect; for, besides the young fellow I have alluded to as being willing to turn Queen's evidence, two of the other prisoners volunteered to 'round on their pals.' One of these two was accepted, and the result was we were enabled to gather up details which, put together, made up a story as startling as anything the annals of crime had revealed for a long time. Indeed, it seemed pretty clear that we should ultimately be able to prove that one at least of the prisoners had been mixed up with a murder case in the city, when an old woman—a caretaker in a city warehouse—had been barbarously beaten to death by the ruffians to prevent her giving an alarm. I may state here that the man was in the end convicted of having taken a hand in the crime, and received a life sentence.

In the meantime, pending the coming trial, I was very anxious about Jan Thorson, for from what we had now learnt we knew he was the chief ringleader and a most dangerous pest to society, and to let him escape was to leave the work unfinished. With a view, therefore, of trying to get on his track I visited Mrs. Birket in the hospital, where she was still detained, and still very ill, and questioned her about Jan, but

she assured me that she knew very little about him, and I should be likely to learn more if I went to 'Bags,' the other lodger, at her husband's house, and so I lost no time in getting at that individual. He was an old and miserable sinner, ripe with age, and ready to fall into his grave, but still clinging to life with that desperate grasp peculiar to such as he. At first he denied all knowledge of Jan, with the exception of a casual acquaintance through living under the same roof with him. But as I had every reason to think the old rascal was keeping something back, I threatened him with arrest, and that had the effect of altering his story, and piece by piece I learned that this hoary rascal had been a sort of jackall to Jan—that is, in his capacity of buyer of old rubbish at gentlemen's houses he was often enabled to gain valuable information about the premises, and this information he sold to Jan. By hard pressing and threats I further exacted from the rascal that he had communicated with Jan since the latter's flight, Jan having written to him to sell some stolen plate which was stored in a loft of Birket's house, and send him half the money realised. This request had been carried out by Bags, and he had sent the money to a house in a street off Ancoats, Manchester.

As I had not much fear but what I could lay my hands on Bags when I wanted him, for he was too old, too poor, and too feeble to get far away, I left him free, and started for Manchester as soon as I could get a train. I found that the house indicated in Ancoats was one of evil repute, kept by a Dutch Jew, and in this wretched place Jan Thorson was lurking. He had considerably altered his appearance by shaving his face and dyeing his hair, so that a stranger would

have found a difficulty in recognising him from the printed description that had been circulated. But I recognised him at once, although, when I accosted him as Jan Thorson, and told him I had a warrant for his arrest, he waxed indignant, and said that his name was not Thorson, and that he had never been in London in his life. Then I reminded him of the little incident of my selling him his own knife, which he had dropped in Mr. Mayland's house, but still he protested his innocence, though without avail. When I told him I should take him notwithstanding, he changed his tone and manner, and became ferocious, then hurled me against the wall of the room by a terrific blow on the chest, sprang through a window in a back yard, jumped over a wall almost with the agility of a squirrel, and was off. But I was after him by the same route, and though the blow he had given me had knocked the breath out of me, I was determined he should not escape, though I died for it. I saw him disappear at the end of the entry which is peculiar to the backs of houses in Lancashire and some other parts of England where rows of houses stand back to back. I tore after him, and, getting into the street, raised a hue and cry, which was taken up by a policeman, who sprang his rattle, and other policemen joined in the chase, which became very exciting; but before I had gone far I pitched on my face and fainted from the effects of the tremendous blow the ruffian had given me. I was picked up and taken into a surgeon's house close by, and in a little time, though suffering great pain, was enabled to go to my hotel; and very shortly I had the satisfaction of learning that Jan Thorson had been captured in some brickfields off the Oldham Road, though not

before a desperate fight, during which he had nearly killed a policeman by hurling a brick at his head. For this it was necessary that he should be brought before a local magistrate, and, knowing that he was now in safe hands, I returned to London, and was laid up for three or four weeks.

When the trial of the gang came on, Jan Thorson was one of the gang arraigned, and we were enabled to get together evidence which clearly established the fact that he had been the prime mover in the robbery at Mr. Mayland's, and that it was his hand which felled the butler. And so this wild human beast, together with some of his companions, was caged for life, and the others got sentences ranging from five to twenty years. I may as well state that 'Bags' escaped any punishment that might have been meted out to him as a seller of goods knowing them to be stolen by shuffling off this mortal coil. About a fortnight after my interview with him he was found one morning dead in his bed. Probably the fright he had received had accelerated his death.

Thus this gang of desperadoes was thoroughly broken up and dispersed, and the wholesale burglaries ceased.

TRAPPING A THIEF-TRAINER.

MANY years ago—more than I care to count—in the days of my youth, I was travelling on the Continent, and at one of the places where I stayed I was the guest of a Polish family, which included several young ladies of very lively and inquiring dispositions. Although well read, they had travelled but little, and their notions of other peoples and other countries were sometimes very amusing, and at times even grotesque. It was my privilege to be much in their company, and the questions they put to me with regard to England were often exceedingly puzzling, no less than startling. One of them—the youngest—a charming demoiselle of seventeen, took my breath away one day by exclaiming—

‘Now tell me, Mr. Donovan, is it true, as I have heard, that in your country there are regular training schools for young thieves?’

I looked at her in astonishment, and said with a smile—

‘You don’t wish me, of course, mademoiselle, to take that question seriously?’

‘Indeed, I do,’ she remarked, with a pretty pout. ‘Why, I have even been told that French, and Germans, and Italians send children over to your country to be specially trained in these schools, and

the tutors make quite a handsome living out of their calling.'

I laughed outright at this, although I was conscious that I was guilty of rudeness, and I told the young lady that in many cases it certainly was necessary to go abroad to learn news, and this was a case in point. I was compelled to confess to entire ignorance of the subject about which she was anxious to get information, and I ventured on the assertion that whoever had told her that 'thief-training institutions' existed in England had either been guilty of libelling the country or had been enjoying a little joke at her expense.

This remark rather offended her, as it seemed to reflect on her intelligence, and she said drily—

'Oh, well, sir, I suppose you are ashamed to own to the truth, for I am satisfied that my informant was perfectly serious when he made the statement; and, in fact, your own great novelist, Charles Dickens, describes these schools.'

As I did not wish to incur the young lady's lasting displeasure, I deemed it prudent not to prolong the discussion, and I told her that personally I had no knowledge of such institutions; but I would endeavour, for her satisfaction, to try and learn something about them.

Of course, in my own mind—as I need scarcely remark—I felt that the notion was a ridiculous one, and in accord with many other absurd ideas that foreigners get with reference to England.

Long after that happy time, and when that young lady had become the mother of a numerous family, and after many wanderings over the face of the globe, destiny cast my lines in Glasgow, where it was my

duty to deal with human crime in its various phases, her question came back to me with startling force one day when, in the course of an interview with my chief, he said—

‘Somewhere, in this town, there is a regular training school for young thieves, and you must try and root it out.’

Now, I was aware that for some time there had been quite an epidemic of pocket-picking. The audacity displayed in committing these petty thefts led to the inference that experts of no mean order were engaged in the business and were reaping a good harvest. Ladies were the principal victims, and even the sanctity of the church did not protect them from the depredations of the light-fingered gentry, for complaints were numerous of purses and other things being lost by members of different congregations on Sunday nights, for the thieves elected evening for their work. It will be readily understood that under the circumstances difficulties in the way of detection were very considerable, for the operations of the pickpockets were spread over a wide area, and they patronised theatres, ’busses, steamboats, trains, concerts, public meetings, &c. Complaints were numerous, and though the ordinary police, as well as the detective staff, were instructed to exercise unusual vigilance, no arrests were made. It soon became clear to us, therefore, that we, the watchers, were being watched, and that we had to deal with a gang of clever thieves, who were pursuing their calling in a perfectly systematic manner, and using every possible means to circumvent those who were so desirous to make their acquaintance.

It was the height of summer—an exceptionally fine

summer for Scotland—and large numbers of tourists were daily passing through the city. As most of these people were well provided with money, the thieves had a rich mine at their disposal, and they proved themselves quite capable of working it. Nor did they confine the exercise of their craft to Glasgow alone, but they practised on the stream of tourists that flowed from Edinburgh through the Trossachs and Loch Lomond. They seemed to devote themselves to that well-worn route, and, though the travellers suffered considerably, the thieves showed that they had no particular partiality, and natives and visitors alike were considered fair game; while church or theatre, 'bus or steamboat, road or rail—it mattered not which—was considered a good field by the enterprising gentry to pursue their art in. I use the word 'gentry' in a general sense, because we had good reason to believe that the plunderers were not all of the male sex, for ladies suddenly found themselves bereft of purses, trinkets, handkerchiefs, and such like things in places where men or boys could hardly have penetrated without attracting very marked attention, and it was perfectly obvious that the rogues, whether male or female, were anxious to avoid putting themselves in any position where they would be conspicuous.

It was the opinion of those best able to judge that these operations were being conducted by a gang of exceedingly well-trained young thieves, who had been regularly schooled in this nefarious business, and when sufficiently well drilled they had been sent out to work under the supervision of the trainer. Complaints at last became so numerous that I received instructions to give every attention to the matter, and

endeavour to catch some of the thieves. A staff of four plain clothes officers were placed at my disposal, and I do not think it reflects upon us to say that for some time we were unsuccessful in our efforts to secure a haul, although the robberies went merrily on. People growled and grumbled; the newspapers hurled the usual *brutum fulmen* at the heads of the police, and the thieves, no doubt, were highly delighted. At length, one afternoon I was coming down Loch Lomond in one of the passenger steamers that was crowded with tourists, when a cry was raised that a lady had been robbed of her purse, which contained a considerable sum of money, besides some odds and ends, including the half of a first-class return tourist ticket to Manchester. This lady was one of a party of twelve, and with her friends had been travelling in the Highlands. They joined the boat at Tarbet, and the lady, whose name was Bradshaw, was certain she had her purse there, because she opened it to take out sixpence to give to a boy who had carried a bag and a bundle of wraps for her. Soon after the boat had left the Tarbet pier Mrs. Bradshaw got into conversation with a well-dressed woman of about sixty years of age, who had a youth with her of about fourteen or fifteen, whom she represented as her nephew. The lady became interested in the boy, and talked to him for some time. At last the boy and his aunt went to another part of the steamer, and about ten minutes later Mrs. Bradshaw put her hand into her pocket to get her purse, as she wanted to pay the steward for a bottle of lemonade he had brought her.

Such was the story Mrs. Bradshaw told me, and when she had finished I asked her if she would try

and point out to me the woman and boy who had spoken to her. After moving about the crowded deck for some time, she suddenly nudged me, and said—

‘There they are.’

On one of the seats which she indicated I noticed a woman of lady-like appearance, and considerably past middle age. She had grey hair and a somewhat worn and haggard face. She wore spectacles, and was very respectably dressed. The youth beside her was probably fourteen, with sharp features, small restless eyes, and an expression of what I should term cunning intelligence. His general appearance and dress suggested the schoolboy home for his holidays.

‘Have you reason to think, Mrs. Bradshaw,’ I asked, as we moved on so as not to attract attention, ‘that either the boy or the woman robbed you?’

‘Well, I am really puzzled how to answer you. I should be very sorry indeed to cast suspicion on innocent people, and all I can say is that the boy pressed very closely to me.’

The reader will readily see how difficult it was for me to act on such meagre evidence as this. I was placed in a very delicate position, but having regard to all the facts in connection with the recent robberies it was clearly my duty not to miss the slightest chance of bringing the guilty parties to justice. But in the present instance there was nothing but the most meagre and flimsy reason for suspecting the boy and the woman. As every one knows, it is a very common thing for passengers travelling together like this to get into conversation with each other, so in that there was nothing suspicious; and, moreover, the boy and woman both had the external evidences

of respectability. They were both well dressed. The woman had a bundle of rugs and umbrellas at her feet, and carried a leather satchel with a polished steel chain. It seemed, indeed, probable that she was what she represented herself to be, that is, the boy's aunt, and that she was taking him for a holiday tour.

Every one with the slightest knowledge of the law knows how dangerous it is to accuse an innocent person of crime, and it is very right that it should be so. Otherwise, perfectly innocent and respectable people might soon have their reputations ruined by reckless and unfounded charges. Certainly, I knew my business and position too well to accuse the woman and her nephew of pocket-picking on such slender evidence as the very barest suspicion. Let it be understood, however, that this was only professional caution on my part, for the mere appearances of respectability did not lead me to conclude at once that the suspected people were innocent. On the contrary, I was perfectly well aware that some criminals cultivated respectability as their best aid to carrying out their work; and so I was determined not to lose sight of this interesting old lady and her nephew. I told Mrs. Bradshaw that, unless she herself was prepared to give the woman and boy into custody on suspicion of having robbed her, I could take no action in the matter. But she was too intelligent not to see the risk she would run by such a course, as in the event of her suspicions being ill-founded she would render herself liable to heavy damages. The alternative, therefore, was to bear with her loss; and, having obtained from her a full and detailed description of the lost purse and its contents, I promised to com-

municate with her in the event of the property being found. I then resolved to shadow the woman and boy.

When the steamer arrived at Balloch they disembarked with the rest of the passengers, but, instead of following the stream to the railway platform, they went to the little hotel, and when the train started they were not in it, nor was I. Their staying behind was to me a suspicious circumstance, and I was not disposed to leave them there alone, so I engaged a bed at the hotel. That evening, in the course of a conversation I had with the landlord, I learnt that the old lady, who was known there by the name of Mrs. Donaldson, and her nephew as Robert Lindsay, had been staying for a week, and made the tour of the lake every day. She had stated that she belonged to Glasgow, was a widow, greatly attached to her nephew, who was an orphan, and she elected to give him a holiday in this way, as he was very fond of the water.

To me the story seemed a little preposterous, for, though a great many people do eccentric things, I came to the conclusion that Mrs. Donaldson was actuated by other and more sinister motives than merely to ride backwards and forwards every day on the steamer to please her nephew, and I began to think that the scent was getting warm. In reply to a question I put to the landlord which solicited his opinion as to the lady's respectability, he somewhat indignantly resented the imputation my question seemed to carry with it, and he answered that he was sure she was respectable, but, so far as I could gather, the only grounds for his faith were that the lady, having only a very small quantity of luggage with her, had readily consented to his request to pay her bill every morning before going out.

I did not pursue the subject further, as he showed little disposition to be communicative. In fact, it occurred to me that he eyed *me* suspiciously, as if he were impressed with the idea that I had some evil designs against his customer. I therefore did not tell him who I was, nor what my business was, because, after all, Mrs. Donaldson might be a most worthy person, and I should be doing her a wrong by placing her under the shadow of suspicion.

The next morning broke lowering and gloomy, with threatening rain. The Loch looked dark and sullen, and heavy banks of black clouds enshrouded the hills. It was not at all a day calculated to tempt one to a pleasure excursion, but when the train arrived with its freight of excursionists and tourists, the interesting Mrs. Donaldson and her equally interesting nephew, Master Robert Lindsay, were ready to go with the crowd on board the steamer, which was lying alongside the pier with her steam up, ready to start as soon as all the passengers had embarked. The lady had entirely changed her costume, and in such a way that any one who had met her casually on the previous day would not now have recognised her. The youth also wore a different suit, and was enveloped in a large ulster. I was instinctively certain now that the woman and lad were up to no good, but were setting out in search of prey, and I resolved to keep a very sharp eye on them all day.

Soon after the steamer started on her upward voyage the rain came down in torrents, and the mists rolled over the face of the Loch so as to utterly obscure the view. The majority of the passengers went into the saloons to avoid the wet, but my lady Donaldson and her nephew sat stoically by themselves on a form on

the upper deck, enveloped in rugs and sheltered by a large umbrella.

I confess that I was a little puzzled to understand the meaning of this, if it had any meaning; for if their sole object in journeying was to relieve their fellow passengers of purses and other trifles, they might have had ample and golden opportunity, one would have thought, by mixing with the people who crowded the saloons. And as I pondered on the incident, it suddenly occurred to me that very probably they had 'spotted' me, as the saying is, and knew they were being shadowed, and were trying to throw me off the scent. This opinion strengthened later, for I was convinced by the movements of the boy that he had been deputed by the woman to watch me, and the artful manner in which he went about his task disclosed to my practised eye trained cunning, and an artfulness altogether unusual in a youth whose mind is not tainted with criminal notions. I could now no longer doubt that this young gentleman and his aunt—if she was his aunt—were on the prowl for prey.

When the boat reached Inversnaid a large number of passengers, who were going through the Trossachs, landed, and Mrs. Donaldson and the boy with them. I was amongst the crowd, for I was resolved, whatever the cost, not to let my 'suspects' escape me. The game had become too interesting for that. Coaches were in waiting for the passengers going forward, but Mrs. Donaldson and the lad made their way to the hotel. A few other people, deterred by the soaking rain, which had evidently set in for a spell, abandoned the idea of doing the rest of the journey, and adjourned also to the hotel for luncheon. I was glad of this, as it tended to make my presence less conspicuous. The

woman and youth soon gave unmistakable indications—small in themselves, but they did not escape me—that they were conscious that they were being watched. As I did not wish to startle them too much, I went into luncheon, for my appetite was keen. They did not put in an appearance, which gave me no concern, as the coaches had gone, and so, as it seemed to me, they could not get far away from me. I therefore enjoyed my luncheon, and, lighting a cigar, strolled out to the doorway. I whiled away a quarter of an hour or so, but saw nothing of Mrs. Donaldson and her nephew, so I ventured to ask, in an unconcerned sort of way, of an ostler, who was lounging about, if he had seen them, and his reply rather ‘flabbergasted’ me.

‘Oh ay,’ he answered with native gruffness, ‘they’re awa’.’

‘Away! What do you mean?’

‘Weel, they got a ‘machine’* frae the guv’nor tae tak’ them on tae Stronachlacher.’

I honestly confess that my features dropped as I heard this piece of information, for my suspects had for the moment outwitted me. Stronachlacher, as most people know, is at the head of Loch Katrine. Thence a steamer runs to the foot of the Loch, where it is met by coaches that convey the passengers to Callender, and so on to Edinburgh. It seemed obvious to me that Mrs. Donaldson and her nephew had hurried on to catch the steamer that would be waiting for the coach people, and that their intention was to reach Edinburgh, thus giving me the slip. Turning to the stableman, I asked: ‘Have you another machine?’

‘No,’ was the gruff answer.

* *Anglice*—conveyance of any kind.

‘But have you nothing you can let me have?’ I asked with some anxiety.

‘No, they’re a’ oot.’

Here was a dilemma; but still I was determined not to be baffled, and I sought out the landlord, told him who I was, and insisted that it was imperatively necessary that I should go forward without delay. The distance to cover was only about five miles, but, though an excellent walker, I could not hope to reach Stronachlacher in time to catch the boat.

‘Well,’ said the landlord after some reflection, ‘I’ve got an old screw of a horse in the stable, and if you like I’ll clap a saddle on him, and may be you will be able to save the boat.’

‘Anything,’ I answered, ‘so that it will go.’

The ‘screw’ was, consequently, brought out, and screw it was in all conscience, as sorry a nag as I ever put my legs across, and with, as it seemed to me, a disposition to lie down on the road. But by dint of much coaxing, a good deal of heeling, and a liberal use of a riding-whip the thoughtful landlord had provided me with, I got the beast to put forth such pace as was in him, and we reached the place just as the steamer was in the very act of casting off her warps. I turned the nag over to the care of a stableman at the Stronachlacher Hotel, as I had arranged to do, and, making a rush, I saved the boat by the skin of my teeth.

I could not be unmindful of the fact that my hurried arrival was somewhat undignified, and not in accord with my usual way of doing business. But it was all owing to a slight miscalculation on my part, and I resolved that such a thing should not occur again, and I believe that never after was I caught napping in the

same way. As it was, I was not even sure if those I was so anxious to keep up with were on board or not. But I felt that it was a hundred to one that they were, and I decided to keep in seclusion, but with my eyes open.

The steamer being smaller than the Loch Lomond boat, the crush was greater, and, ensconcing myself at the stern, I reduced myself to a state of placidity by means of a cigar, and gave myself up to the enjoyment of the pure air, for the mists hid the scenery.

On reaching the landing-place I took up a position that enabled me to see all the passengers that went ashore, and it was with a keen sense of satisfaction that I noticed Mrs. Donaldson and the youth amongst them. They almost brought up the rear, and I could not help the mental ejaculation—

‘You will have to be precious smart if you give me the go-by again.’

They secured seats on one of the coaches, and I joined a party who were going forward in a brake. On reaching the railway station, I saw that those I was shadowing got into a Glasgow carriage, and I secured a ticket for the same place, wondering what would be the upshot of my little adventure. That the woman and the lad were thieves I had not the slightest doubt in my own mind now, but suspicion was not proof; and at this period I should not have been justified in laying my hands on them, for had I done so it might have been an exceedingly difficult matter to have got evidence to warrant the course, and my reputation would have suffered.

When we reached Glasgow it was a pouring wet night. I was pretty sure the suspects had not observed me since leaving Inversnaid, so I took care

that they should not do so, and no doubt they were chuckling at the thought of having given me the slip.

On emerging from the station they hailed a cab, and drove off southwards. I followed them in another vehicle. They proceeded across the Clyde to a somewhat unsavoury quarter of the city, where alighting they paid the cabman and dismissed him, and entered a house, the number of which I was careful to note.

So far, then, my day's work had ended. Nothing more could be done that night, for the hour was late, but I was satisfied with what I had already accomplished, and I retraced my steps with a feeling that I was in a fair way of making a revelation and unmasking an impostor, for, after what I had seen of Mrs. Donaldson's movements that and the preceding day, I would have staked my existence against her honesty.

The neighbourhood to which I had tracked Mrs. Donaldson was characterised rather by the squalor and poverty of its inhabitants than by crime. It is true we had occasionally hunted out some petty delinquent from that region, but the habitual criminal did not make it his abiding-place.

Mrs. Donaldson's house was up seven flights of stairs, being the top flat of a large tenement. From inquiries carefully pushed I found that she had been living there about seven months, and very little was known about her in the neighbourhood. But immediately opposite was a baker's and huckster's shop, kept by a Mrs. Smith, and this lady's opinion of Mrs. Donaldson was that she was 'a kin' o' mystery, and evidently gey fond o' laddies, for there were a wheen o' them aye gaun tae the hoose.'

This piece of information went far towards con-

firming my suspicions that the woman Donaldson was a thief-trainer. This opinion, of course, I kept to myself, for she was considered in the neighbourhood to be respectable, and to arouse suspicions against her might tend to thwart the ends of justice. The owner of the house said that she paid her rent regularly, and had given a first-rate reference when she took the place. He considered her to be a very good tenant; but his standard of judging was evidently the regularity with which she paid her rent. My course was to get evidence against her that would justify me in arresting her, and the question was how was that to be done. As far as I could see, then, the only thing to do was to watch and wait, and keep her closely under surveillance for a time. I found, however, that two days after her little jaunt through the Trossachs she had taken herself off again, and I failed to get any clue as to where she had gone to, which was unfortunate, as I felt sure she had sallied forth in search of victims once more, or otherwise she was trying to put me off the scent.

If the woman was really what I suspected her to be, and in my own mind I had not the slightest doubt about it, her offence was a peculiarly heinous one, for it was difficult to imagine anything more dreadful than a woman devoting herself to making criminals out of children. The very thought of it caused one to shudder; and though years before I was disposed to regard such a thing as rather an invention of the fictionist, I knew now that the innate wickedness of human nature would stop at nothing, not even at corrupting the delicate mind of a child. My anxiety, therefore, to know more about Mrs. Donaldson, and to stop her career if guilty, may be imagined. It was

a remarkable circumstance that during these many days that I was trying once more to get on Mrs. Donaldson's track there was an utter cessation of complaints about pocket-picking in our neighbourhood. Now what was the reason of this cessation? To my mind there was only one way of accounting for it, which was that Mrs. Donaldson had by some means found out who I was on the day I shadowed her through the Trossachs, and had deemed it prudent to remain quiet for a time. It seemed to me the most feasible explanation on thinking the matter over. About a fortnight later I called on Mrs. Smith, the keeper of the baker's shop, to ask if her neighbour had come back, and learnt that she had not, but that a few days before a strange woman had called to ask Mrs. Smith if she could tell her where Donaldson was. The two women got into conversation, and the caller represented herself as Donaldson's sister, and said, incidentally, that she expected that her sister was at her house in Edinburgh. At this piece of information Mrs. Smith was naturally surprised, and said that she was not aware that Donaldson had a house in Edinburgh.

'Oh, yes,' exclaimed the sister, 'she's lived there for years.'

This statement served to still further increase Smith's surprise, and, prompted more by curiosity than anything else, she asked a number of questions, which elicited the information that Mrs. Donaldson lived in a house in a wynd out of the High Street. The name of the wynd was given, but, unfortunately, it had escaped the memory of Mrs. Smith, and she could come no nearer to the precise spot than 'a wynd off the High Street.'

When I learnt this news I felt that the little drama was becoming somewhat mysterious, and promised to be more than usually interesting. I resolved, therefore, to take more vigorous steps to trace Mrs. Donaldson, and discover what her little game was. It was pretty clear to me that she was a woman of great cupidity and peculiar cunning, and hardly likely to be caught napping. But, on the other hand, I was hardly likely to be beaten by such a woman. I therefore took an early opportunity of going over to Edinburgh, and though 'a wynd off the High Street' was indefinite enough in all conscience, I was not discouraged. There are a dozen or more wynds off the High Street of Edinburgh, as every one knows who has ever been through that historic thoroughfare, and in those wynds are hundreds of houses, sheltering possibly as many more hundreds of human beings, so that with the meagre clue I had it seemed at first sight very much like looking for a hair in a truss of straw; and had I been less acquainted with the ways of the criminal classes, and the *modus operandi* to be employed in order to get on their track, I might have hesitated to attempt to find the lady I was now so desirous of meeting. There was one thing that gave me an advantage, which was I could recognise Mrs. Donaldson amongst ten thousand people, unless she altered her appearance wonderfully. Every lineament of her face was photographed on my memory, and I was able to describe her accurately.

As I have mentioned, there are a great many wynds in the High Street of Edinburgh, and a few at least have a far from enviable reputation. One in particular at the time I refer to was studiously shunned by any one having a reputation to lose. Its inhabitants most

certainly belonged to that class which prey upon their fellows, and years before it had gained an evil name by reason of a barbarous murder, a woman having been brutally kicked to death at the foot of one of the noisome stairs that gave access to the rookeries. The houses in this wynd were occupied by what is termed in police circles a floating population—that is to say, the majority of the people belonged to the vagrant classes. They were there to-day and gone to-morrow. There were, of course, some old residents, but they were the tenants who for the most part let lodgings for the night, the price ranging from a penny to fourpence for the night's accommodation. Although I did not quite expect to find Mrs. Donaldson in this wynd, I had an idea that I might pick up some information about her, if she was what I took her to be. The reason I did not think she would be found there was that, from what little I had gleaned about her, I thought she was not likely to conspicuously congregate with marked evildoers. She carried on her business with evident caution, that was clear, or she could not have succeeded in deceiving her Glasgow neighbours so long. My first plan was to disguise myself as a tramp, and seek a night's shelter in one of the dens that abounded in the wynd. It was an objectionable thing to have to do. Not that it was a novel experience, for I had often gone through it on previous occasions. Indeed, a detective cannot hope to succeed in his profession unless he is intimately acquainted with the ways and habits of criminals, and how is he to gain that knowledge except by mingling with them as one of their kind? In no other way can he understand their minds and know their habits. In the course of my career I have had to place myself in

positions against which all my senses have revolted ; but the knowledge I have derived therefrom has been invaluable to me, and has enabled me to succeed where others in the same line have failed.

The most notorious of the lodging-houses in the wynd was kept by an Irishwoman named Mary Dewey. She was a widow with a great many black marks against her. She had been imprisoned two or three times, and fined dozens of times for drunkenness and other finable offences.

To her den I betook myself one night, and engaged a twopenny 'doss'—that is, for twopence I was to be privileged to make one of two or three dozen others who stretched themselves on dirty rags on the floor. To accurately describe the dreadful place and its occupants, in which and amongst whom I was to pass the night, would require a far more graphic pen than I possess, while it would require the pencil of a Doré, a Fuesli, or a Wiertz to delineate, in all their hideous details, the human ghouls who crowded and jostled each other in the fœtid den.

It was a long, narrow room, with three small windows in it, and a fireplace at one end. But the chimney of this fireplace was stuffed up with rags. Lying in rows on each side of the room, the floor of which was black with dirt, were twenty-nine men and boys, the youngest, perhaps, eleven or twelve, the oldest turned seventy. And there wasn't a face there, not even the youngest, that was not horrible in its look of depravity and wickedness. When the young are early schooled in the ways of crime, the innocent look of childhood speedily fades from the face, and gives place to a peculiar expression, which is well known to those who have dealings with criminals.

As an utter stranger amongst this crowd of outcast wretches, I was regarded with great curiosity and some suspicion by such of them as were awake, and many were the questions that were put to me. Where had I come from? Where was I going to? What lay was I on? I knew how to parry and answer these questions, and an old, grey-headed sinner, who bore a strong resemblance to an ape, for his face was weazened and shrivelled and covered with a stubbly growth of rusty grey hair, while his mouth projected forward just like a monkey's, asked me at last to go and 'doss' alongside of him. As he was evidently an old hand, and likely to be well posted up in all matters appertaining to his particular walk in life, I accepted his invitation, and we were soon engaged in a whispered conversation, and after a time, when he had grown confidential, I ventured to ask him if he knew 'Mistress Donaldson, who faked kiddies up to nick pigskins.'*

The old man reflected a few moments, and then said no, he did not, but he 'kent a square pal,' who was 'fly,' and if I was good for a wet (drink) he would take me to the pal in the morning, and I might learn something. I told him I was good for two or three wets, and soon after that the old fellow fell asleep, and I managed to put the time over until, to my great relief, the rising hour came. Then the old man and I started off to his 'pal,' a desperate old villain, who kept a shebeen in an alley off the Canon-gate. This fellow was known as 'The Jumper,' by reason, as I subsequently learned, of his having jumped while suffering from delirium tremens from a window five storeys high, and escaped with only a

* 'Faked kiddies up to nick pigskins. Taught children to pick pockets.

bruise or two. His real name, though he had quite a string of *aliases*, was James Sinclair. He had been convicted times out of number for all sorts of offences, and a few weeks after my introduction to him—from information I was enabled to give—he was pounced upon by the police for shebeening, and sentenced to a considerable term of imprisonment.

On the occasion I am dealing with he was disposed to be very morose and taciturn with me, but after I had paid for a bottle of his villainous compound yclept whisky he became more communicative, though he said he did not know Mrs. Donaldson. But on his asking what ‘kin’ o’ like body’ she was, I was enabled to describe her so accurately that he exclaimed—

‘It’s no Donaldson you mean. It’s Mother Meldrum, and she stays at No. 6 in —— Wynd, off the High Street.’ When he added, ‘She has a place tae in Glesca,’ I could no longer doubt that it was the same woman.

As soon as I could get away from my undesirable companions I went to the head Police Office to see if they knew anything of Mrs. Meldrum, but they had never heard of the woman, and they said the wynd mentioned was quite a respectable quarter as compared with others in the neighbourhood. This was further evidence of the creature’s artfulness, and of the secrecy with which she conducted her dreadful business, and I, as well as my colleagues, was of opinion that there might be considerable difficulty in getting the necessary legal evidence against her. I suggested that she would have to be trapped in some way, but then came the question, how was it to be done? At length an old policeman volunteered a suggestion. He knew a man who had been a convict,

but, after having served his term, he became an informer, that is, he gave information often of great value to the police, and, of course, he got paid for such information. I need scarcely remark, perhaps, that the police force, like the Government, the army, and the navy, is obliged to have its paid spies. This informer, whose name I must withhold for obvious reasons, although he has been dead for many years, but still members of his family are living, had a son, a lad about fourteen, and no doubt he might be obtained as a bait to draw the wretched old woman.

Acting on this suggestion, I visited the informer, and laid my business before him. He entered into the spirit of the thing, in view of the fact that he was to be well paid for his services, and he brought his son in for me to make his acquaintance. The lad was a little fellow with a preternaturally sharp expression, and a certain quick-wittedness which caused him to seem older than his years. He was by no means a prepossessing lad, and it was difficult to say then whether he was predisposed to good or evil.* The lad expressed his willingness to lend himself to the scheme, and having coached him well up in the part he was to play, he was attired in some well-worn and ragged clothes. And that evening he accompanied me to Mrs. Donaldson's, or Meldrum's, house. I mentioned the Jumper's name by way of an introduction, and after some little parleying I gained

* It is satisfactory to be able to state that I subsequently brought this lad under the notice of a well-known charitable and philanthropic lady. Through her exertions he was sent to school for three years, at the end of which time the lady placed him on a farm in Canada. The last I heard of him was that he was in business for himself and doing well.

admittance to her house by telling her I wished my boy to be well drilled. Of course, I had so far disguised my ordinary appearance as to be under no apprehension that she would recognise me as the person who had shadowed her on Loch Lomond. She was a woman of quite a good address, and of such plausibility that almost any one might have been deceived in her. She talked to the boy for some time, and so well did he play his part that she never once suspected him, and at last, turning to me, she asked me what I would stand if she took him in hand. I asked her to name a figure, and she at once said five pounds, but I told her that was far beyond me, and suggested two, which she ultimately decided to accept, and at my request she consented to give him his first lesson then. So, leading the way into a back room, she unlocked the door of a cupboard, and took therefrom a life-size figure of a female, the dress of which was covered with tiny bells. By means of a cord and hook from the head she suspended the figure to a hook in the ceiling, and, putting a purse in the pocket of the dress, told the boy he must try and take it out without so much as sounding one of the bells on the dress, which, if shaken ever so slightly, set the bells tinkling. Of course the lad was not successful, for even an infinitesimal swaying of the suspended figure caused the bells to jangle. At last the wretched old woman got cross, and the boy began to cry. I thereupon suggested it might be as well not to proceed further that night, and said I would call again the next evening at six o'clock. I was exceedingly punctual in keeping the appointment, but I called that time in a very different character to what she expected to see me in, for as she opened the door I stepped forward and said :

‘My name is Donovan, I am a detective, and I arrest you on a charge of training children for purposes of thieving.’

I don’t know that I ever saw a person so utterly collapse as she did. Her face became of a greenish pallor, and she appeared as if she was going to fall. But suddenly, pulling herself together, she began to make protestations of her innocence (she did not recognise me at this time as the vagrant of the previous night), avowing, with all sorts of solemn assertions, that she was a highly-respectable woman. Then I told her that I had had ocular demonstrations the preceding night of her wickedness, whereupon her whole manner changed, and she became a perfect virago, pouring forth such a torrent of abuse, couched in language so vile that I could scarcely repress a shudder, used as I was to that sort of thing.

With the assistance of two colleagues who were with me I effected her arrest, but not without difficulty, for she resisted desperately, displaying extraordinary strength and agility for a woman of her age. We conveyed her to the station in a cab, and I felt delighted that I had been able to cut this infamous creature’s career short. She seemed now to have become a totally different person to the one I had seen on the steamer on Loch Lomond. From the quiet, apparently staid, lady-like woman, she had changed to a fury, desperation and despair alternating. That she was a remarkably dangerous character could no longer be doubted, and it was matter for congratulation that she had been brought to book.

A search of her houses in Glasgow and in Edinburgh brought to light the extensive ramifications of her business. But a still more startling revelation was in

store for us. From an old letter found in a drawer, addressed to a Mrs. Mary Pullen, we were enabled to prove that that was her real name, that she had suffered five years' imprisonment for swindling, and that she was the wife of a most notorious ruffian, who had been a thief from his earliest youth, and who at the age of thirty-two had been convicted at Manchester of killing a man in a fight, and sentenced to penal servitude for life. His wife, Mrs. Pullen, *alias* Mrs. Donaldson, *alias* Meldrum, and various other *aliases*, had joined issues with a man in Manchester who had also been a convict, and these two worthies worked together, the man sending youths from Manchester to be trained by the woman. These things and many more came out at her trial, the result being that she was duly convicted and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. I tried hard to trace the youth who was with her the day I first made her acquaintance on Loch Lomond, and who, no doubt, relieved Mrs. Bradshaw of her purse. My efforts, however, were fruitless, for no doubt those interested in him kept him out of the way when they heard that the woman had been taken. How many thieves this infamous creature had made it is difficult even to guess at, but there was general satisfaction expressed that she would not get the chance of making any more. If the means I had taken to entrap her were objectionable, there was surely never a case where the means were more fully justified by the end than this one.

Mrs. Pullen did not live to complete her sentence, for she died five years later after a year and a half spent in the hospital owing to cancer in the face. Those who had charge of her said that she died penitent, and expressing horror for her wasted and wicked life.

A PRECIOUS PAIR OF SCOUNDRELS.

For many years there stood at the corner of an important but not altogether reputable thoroughfare in the south of London a large block of buildings that had at one time been let as tenement houses. The tenants, however, had long since departed, whither heaven only knew, and the buildings stood a dark and melancholy wreck. The property was in 'Chancery,' hence its mournful appearance. Every pane of glass had been shivered to atoms by the mischievous street arabs. The door was like the window-sashes, paintless and rotting. The water channels on the roof had become blocked, and the water poured down over the front brick wall, leaving tracks of blackish green slime. The area was the receptacle for a heterogeneous collection of rubbish and filth. Dead cats and dogs lay and festered there. There were heaps of rotting rags, old boots and shoes, broken bottles, and the hundred and one things that soon collect in a spot that it is no one's business to look after. It was pitiable to see such a sight in London's wealthy town. The land upon which the buildings stood was exceedingly valuable, although it was close to the notorious 'New Cut,' the home and haunt of some of the vilest specimens of humanity, male and female, to be found in the whole of the Great Babylon. But a new era was

dawning, when the besom of the Metropolitan improvements was bound to reach this unsalubrious spot, and sweep some of its vileness away. So, notwithstanding the existence of this sink of iniquity, land in the neighbourhood was of almost fabulous value.

The buildings I am describing had had a curious history. They dated back for over three hundred years, and had formerly been the town houses (there were two houses) of people of fashion. And in one of them there had once lived a nobleman who became a naval commander, and distinguished himself in more than one of our great sea fights, earning for himself a marble monument in England's magnificent Valhalla—Westminster Abbey. At last the property got into the hands of a miserly and eccentric man, named Baintree, who was a builder by trade. But soon after he came into possession, and during a terrible cholera year in London, a plague fell upon the inhabitants of these houses, and something like two dozen persons perished. The owner himself took the disease, and succumbed; and it was then found that he had by will devised the property to his only daughter—a woman thirty years of age—and his sons, of whom there were four, were left penniless. The first thing they did was to lock their sister up in a lunatic asylum, and then they tried to upset the will, but failed after three or four years of litigation. The will was confirmed by the Court, and the woman was declared to be sane.

On her release, however, she soon showed that, if not legally mad, she was eccentric to the very verge of insanity, and, having cursed her brothers, and wished them all manner of evil, she took up her residence in one of the houses, and declined to let the

other. For some years she led a lonely, solitary life, and allowed her property to go to rack and ruin. As the window-panes got broken she replaced them with brown paper or rags. As the chimney-pots fell down she allowed them to remain, and she refused to spend a single penny on paint or the most necessary repairs. She remained a spinster, and her one hobby seemed to be to gather around her dozens of cats, which, however, she starved; and she was constantly figuring in the Courts, both for cruelty and for keeping her place in an insanitary condition.

For thirty years this strange, human excrescence led a lonely, useless life, and it was said that during that long period no one but herself ever entered the portals of the houses. But one dark and stormy night a visitor did enter—a visitor that comes to us all, sooner or later. It was the Angel of Death. And days after, the old woman not having been seen, the door was broken open, and the explorers who had the hardihood to enter beheld a terrible sight. On some filthy straw and old sacks in a corner of a bare room the woman lay dead, and the gaunt and starving cats had been feeding off her body. No will could be discovered, and it became necessary to find an heir. It was known that three of her brothers were dead. One had died in the workhouse, but what had become of the fourth? He, being the youngest, had gone years ago to Australia, and no one knew whether he was living or dead. And until he turned up, if living, or his death was proved, there was nothing for it but to put the property into Chancery. Every one knows what that means. Although the Court of Chancery has untold millions locked up, it will spend never a penny if it can help it, and so the old woman's pro-

perty, while waiting for an heir, went from bad to worse, and mouldered to decay like the dead woman herself. Of course it got an evil reputation, and people said it was haunted, and one night murder put its curse upon it. A man and a woman got in somehow, and the man murdered the woman. He fled, and was never captured, and she, being an unknown waif, was buried in a nameless pauper's grave.

So years passed, and the quest of the heir was still kept up, for no proof was forthcoming of his death. At last a man and his son offered to rent one of the houses, and by the advice of the lawyers, who had got their claws upon the property, the Court decided to accept the offer, and one of the solicitors was appointed trustee to receive the rent. So in due time the windows in the lower part of the house were repaired. A new door was put up, together with a brass plate on the portal, that bore the legend: 'John Arthur Heathcote & Son, commission agents.'

Now, there was one peculiarity in connection with the Messrs. Heathcote, no one seemed to know where they came from, or what the exact nature of their business was, for, after all, 'commission agent' is a very elastic term, and may mean much or little. It is presumable, however, that they had, to some extent, satisfied the lawyers of their respectability, or, at any rate, of their ability to pay their rent, as, after all, that was the main consideration with the legal gentlemen. For they were anxious to see some money coming in, so that they might get their little bills of costs already incurred, and as they had prosecuted their search for the heir by order of the Court, they were, of course, entitled to payment as soon as there were any funds. So possibly, probably in fact—very probably—they

were not too inquisitive about the strange tenants. Some months after Messrs. Heathcote had entered on their tenancy of what had become known as 'Murder Buildings,' a big robbery took place at a West-End mansion, and it devolved upon me, as part of my duty, to inquire into the matter. The property stolen consisted of a considerable quantity of real silver plate, and some very valuable jewellery, including a diamond brooch, a diamond tiara, and a diamond hair-pin.

In the course of time I was successful in getting a clue to the thieves, and found that they were some of the most notorious denizens of the notorious New Cut. It was my first practical acquaintance with this unsalubrious spot,* and I found that it exceeded even the worst description I had heard of it. The worst of London's villainy and wickedness seemed to have concentrated there. I was successful in tracking my men down, and arresting them, though not without considerable trouble and some personal risk. But though the thieves—four altogether—were captured, the stolen property was not forthcoming, though every possible means were used to trace it. It was, therefore, very obvious that the wretches had disposed of it, and the only channel through which they could have realised on it was a 'fence,' or receiver of stolen property. Now, it was clear that whoever had bought it must have been in a large way of business, because no little trader could have dealt in such things. I don't mean altogether as regards the price paid to the thieves, for, as is well known, the 'fences' only give

* Since then the New Cut has been vastly improved, and many of the rookeries have been swept away. Now any one may traverse the New Cut with perfect safety. Before, it was not prudent for any respectably-dressed person to enter into it.—THE AUTHOR.

about one-eighth of the value for stolen things. But the purchasers must have been well acquainted with the market, and able to speedily dispose of the plate and jewellery. The things stolen were valued at nearly ten thousand pounds, some of the diamonds being perfect in their way. Now, diamonds are things that thieves cannot readily sell, except to the 'fences,' who must, as I have said, have a good connection.

In the case I am dealing with there could be no question that the articles had been quickly disposed of, and though a mitigation of sentence was promised to any one of the gang who would disclose the name of the 'fence,' not one would do so; for thieves know well if they betray the purchaser of stolen goods their chance of selling anything else in the future has gone for ever. As a matter of fact, the professional 'fences' are very rarely betrayed, and it is always exceedingly difficult to get at them. In this case the thieves could not be tempted, though, as a last resource, it was hinted that it was in the bounds of possibility a free pardon might be granted to an informer. But even this did not draw them, and so the rascals were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, and it seemed as if the stolen property was irrecoverably lost.

To all connected with the case this was a source of very great annoyance, and the owner of the property was much distressed, for many of the things were souvenirs, and some had been given by friends who were dead and gone. As regards the gold and the silver, it was pretty certain that it had found its way immediately into the melting-pot, that being the destiny of stolen precious metal, for by this means identity is destroyed, and there is, comparatively speaking, little difficulty in disposing of the melted

metal. With diamonds and other precious stones the case is different. The slightest damage to them deteriorates their value. And as stones of any note are pretty well known to dealers, who can readily recognise them, great caution is necessary in dealing with them in an unlawful way. Consequently they are generally sent abroad as soon as possible, and it will strike the reader at once that the 'fence' who trades in this class of property must be a man of considerable means, and have a foreign connection. Generally, precious stones that are stolen are ultimately disposed of by the traders in stolen property in some of the Eastern countries.

The usual sources of information available to the police having failed to give us any clue to the lost property, it seemed as if we should have to be content with having caged the thieves for a considerable period, and my chief said to me one morning in a somewhat bantering spirit—

'Well, Donovan, you've only half done your work. Of course, I give you credit for the capture of the thieves, but had you recovered the property you might have distinguished yourself.'

'I thank you for your small meed of praise,' I answered caustically. 'You must not forget, however, that I cannot perform impossibilities; no more can you or any other man.'

'No—true,' said he. 'But is it impossible to trace this property?'

I was thoughtful for some time before I answered. Then I said—

'Even the possible at times seems so impossible that one may be pardoned for feeling hopeless.'

'Ah, true; but a sanguine man should never allow

himself to sink to that condition of hopelessness. Seeing that we have to do with rogues and thieves who, though cunning, generally do very stupid acts, it ought not to be impossible to get a clue that would enable us to ascertain what has become of the things. It is hardly likely, of course, that we can ever recover them, but the information, at any rate, will be valuable in our archives.'

These words had a marked effect upon me. They stimulated me to renewed efforts. I never could bear the thought of failure in anything I undertook, and as I had played a prominent part in capturing the thieves who had committed this burglary, it seemed to me clearly my duty to trace the stolen property. But then came the question—'How was it to be done?' I confess that I could not answer the question. One might grope about in the dark, as it were, and by the merest chance stumble on a clue, but I was aware that was only a remote contingency. No—it was clear to me that some decided and systematic action was necessary, and I spent a whole month in thinking out some plan that would promise the probability of success.

At length, one very wet and dismal night, about half-past eleven, a shivering, ragged, starved-looking wretch was making his way along the New Cut, casting furtive glances about him as if he were hunted, and drawing his rags about his body in a vain endeavour to protect himself from the cold and the rain. Turning down one of the side narrow streets that run off the 'Cut,' he stopped before a squalid, dirty-looking house, over the door of which, painted on a transparency, illumined by a feeble candle, was the one word, 'Lodgings.' This house—long since

swept away—was a den of infamy, but it nightly afforded shelter to a hundred or more debased and depraved wretches of both sexes, whom it would have been a charity to themselves and their more respectable fellows to have put out of the world by some merciful euthanasia. However, this could not be in a so-called civilised country. Of course, if they committed murder, which they sometimes did, they were hanged when convicted, and for robbery and outrage, by which they subsisted, they were shut up in gaol when robbery and outrage could be proved against them. The stringent lodging-house regulations that now obtain were not known then, and such plague holes as I am describing enjoyed comparative immunity from parochial sanitary officers.

The ragged man stopped before this house, seemed to reflect for some moments, then knocked with the rusty, broken knocker that hung on the cracked and paintless door. After he had knocked two or three times again, and waited some minutes, the door was opened cautiously a few inches, and a face appeared in the opening. A wolfish, greedy face, with a sodden, greasy appearance, and red, running eyes, from which all the eyelashes had fallen. It was the face of a gaunt, dirty, unkempt man, who was revolting and repellent as a human thing.

‘What do you want?’ he growled in a rusty, cracked voice.

‘I want a lodging, master,’ answered the stranger abjectly.

‘Have you any rhino?’

‘Yes, threepence.’

Thereupon the sore-eyed, wolfish man opened the door and admitted the stranger, who was taken down

a flight of wooden stairs to the basement, which was two large cellars thrown into one. There was a large open chimney without a grate, but an iron basket filled with glowing coke supplied its place. The floor of the cellar was the natural earth, full of ruts and holes. The walls had at some time or other been whitewashed, but now they were stained, blackened, and slimy with damp and mildew. The ceiling was black, and festooned with cobwebs, and a 'slush lamp,' such as is used by sailors in a ship's fore-castle, was suspended by a chain. In the centre of the floor was a very common wooden table, and forms were ranged round the walls.

In this fœtid, unwholesome den about two dozen men and boys were gathered, some of them crowding round the burning coke for the sake of the warmth. Three or four were seated at the table playing cards with a pack of cards so greasy, black, and worn that it was almost impossible to tell one card from the other; and the rest were stretched out on the forms asleep, most of them face downwards. They were a villainous, cut-throat looking crew, many of them old gaol-birds, and all, without exception, even the youngest, dangerous criminals. They were human pariahs, homeless and friendless, who preyed upon society.

As the stranger entered all those who were awake turned and eyed him suspiciously, and one big, low-browed vagabond exclaimed—

'What cheer, Cully?'

'So, so,' the man answered.

'Where do you hail from?'

'I have the key of the street, mate.'

'Are you fly?'

‘Rhombo, I’ve been doing the mill.’*

‘What for?’

‘For nicking a bloke’s white turnip.’†

‘Are you a furringer in the village?’‡

‘Yes; I’ve been padding the hoof.’§

‘Are you stumped?’||

‘I’ve got as much as will pay for a doss.’

The tramp having been thus cross-examined, as it were, and proved himself satisfactory, he was not subjected to any more questioning. The low-browed vagabond who had questioned him seemed to be a person of importance in that assembly, and he was addressed as ‘Boss.’ It was evident, too, that he was an old lag—that is, a convict, and had served many a term of imprisonment. The stranger seemed to pay great attention to him and to look up to him, and the two having got chatting together they remained up after the other waifs had sought sleep on the forms or the ground. Then the stranger became more confidential, and asked the Boss if he could put him on to a lay.

‘You’ll have to spot a crib and crack it,’ answered the Boss with a grim smile, meaning that the stranger would have to look out for some place to rob.

‘Ah, if my pal hadn’t been lagged I wouldn’t be hard up now,’ sighed the stranger dolefully.

‘Who is your pal?’

‘Big Scottie.’

‘What, the covey what was tuk for nicking the sparklers (diamonds) from the West-End crib?’

‘Yes.’

* In prison.

† Stealing a silver watch.

‡ Are you a stranger in London? § Been on the tramp.

|| Meaning, Are you without money?

‘I know’d Scottie, too,’ said the Boss reflectively.
 ‘But he warn’t much of a pal.’

‘Why?’ asked the stranger sharply.

‘He warn’t rhombo.’

‘How do you know?’

‘Well, I’ve heard chaps say so.’

The stranger seemed to become very thoughtful for a time, and at last remarked—

‘I’m hanged if I don’t think you’re right.’

‘Did he have you, mate?’ asked the Boss pointedly.

‘Well, he didn’t exactly have me, ’cos, you see, I wasn’t in the swim with him; but I done him many a good turn, and he promised me something out of the swag, but devil a stiver did I ever see. Then I heard as he’d been tuk, but I don’t think they got any of the sparklers, did they?’

‘You bet they didn’t,’ answered the Boss with a leer. ‘Big Scottie was too fly for the beaks.’

‘But what did he do with the sparklers?’

‘Well, I don’t know; but, you bet, he traded ’em.’

‘Or buried ’em,’ the stranger suggested.

‘No fear!’ exclaimed the Boss with a laugh of contempt, as though he thought the stranger very simple.

‘Did he trade ’em in the village?’

‘You bet he did.’

‘I don’t believe it,’ said the stranger musingly.

‘Well, you’re a mug, that’s what I’ve got to say.’

‘Maybe I am, old man; but, look here, if you’ll put me on a “fence” that will take some of the same stuff, I know where I can make a haul.’

The Boss looked at the stranger incredulously, and after a time he asked with a sneer—

‘Where is the place?’

The stranger placed his finger on his nose, as much as to say you can't catch old birds with chaff, and he remarked—

‘I’m fly, mate, and know how many beans make five. Now, I’ve got the lay of a crib just as sure as you’re there, and I tell you I can get some sparklers if I knew where to part with ’em. You see, it’s no use making a haul of them things if a fellow can’t fence ’em.’

‘Right you are, old pal,’ exclaimed the Boss, growing a little excited, and extending his dirty paw for the other to grasp, which he did. Then the Boss laid his left hand on the stranger’s shoulder in an easy, familiar, and confidential manner, and he said in a low tone, ‘Put me in the swim, and I’ll stand by you to the death. Every one as knows me knows as I’m right.’

‘Well, I’ll chum in along with you.’

‘Bully for you,’ and the Boss patted the stranger’s shoulder. ‘Now, where’s your crib?’

‘It’s a big house this side o’ York, and I’m nuts on a wench there. The gemman’s some’at to do with railways, and he goes away a good deal, and his missus has any amount o’ sparklers.’

The Boss waxed enthusiastic, and squeezing the stranger’s hand until he almost brought tears from his eyes, he said—

‘I’m on that lay, old friend, and will stick to you like a leech.’

‘But where are we to fence the goods if we get ’em?’

‘You leave that to me now. That’ll be all right.’

‘Well, mate, you ain’t going to kid me like that.’

‘Do you think I’m kidding?’

‘Yes.’

‘Well, I tell you what I can do. I can take you to the same “fence” what traded Big Scottie’s sparklers.’

‘Is he in the village?’

‘Yes, old pal, and not a ’undred miles from this ’ere spot.’

‘Whereabouts?’

‘You’re rhombo now?’

‘Yes, rhombo as steel.’

‘Do you know Murder Buildings?’ the Boss asked mysteriously.

‘What, you mean the old woman’s property what’s gone to ruin?’

‘Yes.’

‘I know it, then. It’s away up the road here, not far from the bridge.’

‘That’s it. Well, there’s a covey and his son as calls themselves Heathcote what’s got one of them houses in Murder Buildings. Though his real name aint Heathcote. He’s old Mo Davis what used to keep a fencing shop down in Spitalfields. But he’s good to trade to any amount.’

At this information the stranger’s face became pale as if with sudden excitement, and his eyes brightened up as if with joy.

‘Now mind you keep this dark,’ pursued the Boss, ‘for Moses is very good to us chaps, and will trade anything from us, and there aint one of us what wouldn’t die before we split on him. He is one of the right sort, and he laughs at all the traps* in London. There isn’t one that suspects him.’

The stranger seemed perfectly delighted, and chuckled as he remarked—

* Policemen.

‘You’re a right sort o’ pal, and you bet we’ll know each other better afore we’ve done.’

‘Well, you’ll find me jannock, old man, and I sticks to my friends.’

The two shook hands again and, as the hour was late, they said good night, the Boss having promised to stand breakfast in the morning, when it was arranged that they should discuss the plan of operations for cracking the crib near York. The Boss then coiled himself up in a corner of the den, and the stranger utilised the table for a couch, but, judging from his restlessness, it seemed as if he was not quite used to such a hard bed. But it was not only the bed—it was the place altogether. The thick, reeking atmosphere, the fumes from the coke, the smoke from the slush lamp, the effluvia that emanated from the unwashed bodies of the wretches who were sprawled about, the snores that arose from all sides—these things in conjunction disturbed him, and he could not sleep. And after a time he got up, stretched himself, gazed steadily for a time over to the corner where the Boss was coiled, as if to assure himself that that worthy was locked in sleep, and, being satisfied that such was the case, he crept cautiously out of the filthy cellar, and made his way lightly up the wooden stairs that, in spite of his efforts, creaked beneath his tread. However, he gained the passage without any one giving sign that he had been disturbed. So the stranger groped his way along the passage, and managed, after a good deal of fumbling, to get the street door open, and then he stepped out, drawing a great sigh of relief as he breathed the cool morning air, which was deliciously pure as compared with the awful atmosphere of the dreadful den he had just left.

With a sense of thankfulness he hurried away, and, after a brisk walk of nearly an hour, he gained a villa house standing in a neat garden near Clapham Common, which seemed a paradise after the villainous region he had come from.

Reader, I was that stranger, and need I say that I was elated and delighted at the discovery I had made.

The little scheme I had carried out, and the deception I had practised on the Boss, were justified by results. Truly the end justified the means in this case. The fearful place in which I had spent those trying hours I knew as a rendezvous for thieves and bad characters, and I felt tolerably certain that I should be able to learn something that might be useful. For amongst these people there is a remarkable freemasonry, and I deemed it highly probable some of them would know of the 'fence' who, in thieves' jargon, had traded the 'sparklers' stolen by Big Scottie and his pals. My success had far exceeded my anticipations, and I congratulated myself on the get-up and appearance of wretchedness which had enabled me to deceive those human hawks. Of course I was astonished to learn that Messrs. Arthur Heathcote & Son, commission agents, of Murder Buildings, were buyers of stolen property, and I was still more astonished, perhaps, to find that Heathcote was Moses Davis. I had never seen Moses Davis in my life, but I had heard about him, and knew that there was a record against him in Scotland Yard. I made it my business to look up this, and I found that he was described as a notorious 'receiver,' and trainer of young thieves. He had suddenly disappeared from Spitalfields, however, and a memorandum was attached to

the record to the effect that he had probably gone abroad. He was believed to have originally come from Holland.

One of the most difficult things in regard to bringing 'fences' to justice is that of getting legal evidence against them. The buyers of stolen goods are generally—not always, but generally—Jews, and the craft and cunning, which are marked characteristics of the lower class of Israelites, are often developed in the 'fence' to a degree that may be said to be perfection. He knows when he begins his nefarious business that he does so in defiance of the law, and that if he is to be undisturbed he must outwit the law. That may seem a difficult thing to do when it is remembered how Argus-eyed the law is. But, difficult as it is, the 'fence' does it. Not that he always continues to succeed, for occasionally he is bowled over and suffers due punishment for his crimes. But these buyers of stolen goods think that the hauls made are well worth the risks run. And most certainly the gains are great, though probably no greater than they would be in successful legitimate trading. Now, as a rule, the 'fence' will buy anything that has any real value. But his weakness is for gold and silver, jewellery of all kinds, and precious stones. The reason of this partiality will be obvious. In stones and jewels there may be large value in little bulk, while gold and silver can so quickly be changed into a condition, by means of the melting-pot, when it can no longer be identified, that the 'fence' prefers these things before all others. Of course it goes without saying that the 'fence' must have a market for the sale of the things he buys. If no such market existed, the 'fence's' occupation would be gone; and if there were no 'fences,' there would be

fewer thieves. But, as a matter of fact, the trade in stolen goods is a thoroughly organised one, but carried on so secretly and with such caution as almost to defy detection.

To make it clear to the reader how the business is managed, I will instance a burglary of what I may venture to describe as of the first rank. It has been decided by skilled cracksmen that the residence of some wealthy person shall be visited. Before this is done, however, the enterprising burglars have got to know a good deal about the habits and movements of the people of the house, and whether they keep much jewellery and money on the premises, and whether the service of plate is real silver or merely electro. As a rule, electro is not touched by members of the higher ranks of the 'profession.' It is left for the area sneak, or the sham bellhanger or plumber, who will 'nick' anything that will fetch the price of a drink. The burglars' knowledge is gained in a variety of ways—sometimes through the servants, at others through the tradespeople's employés, who call at the houses for orders, and, again, by a system of espionage on the part of the thieves themselves. When such knowledge as may be useful in the enterprise has been derived from some source or other, the 'fence' is notified that on such and such a day he may expect some 'metal' and 'pea nuts' (precious stones), so that he is all ready to receive the goods.

The following letter is a fac-simile of one preserved at Scotland Yard. It was written by a notorious burglar now undergoing penal servitude for life for the very burglary he alludes to, and the dear hold unkel (dear old uncle) was a no less notorious 'receiver,' now dead. This letter was found in the

'receiver's' house by the police, who were fortunate in securing his conviction:—

'Deer hold unkel me and a foo rorty ones is agoing a hunting and shud as ow we maik a bag look out for igh hold times there will be metal and pea nuts so blow yer bellers (bellows) hold un and ixpect gud noos at hanny moment so no more at presint from ver afectinhate pal The Kid.'

Now let us suppose the gentlemen of the night have been successful and made a good haul, and we will assume that three or four are in the swim, for it is a notorious fact that burglars work in gangs. The late Mr. Charles Peace—who regarded burglary as a fine art, and whose life came to an untimely end at Armley Jail, Leeds, one gloomy morning years ago—scorned companions, as is well known, but he was quite an exception, and your professional housebreaker is generally accompanied by one or more companions. Well, having succeeded in their task, one of the number is deputed trustee for the time being, and he hurries off to the 'fence,' who appraises the goods, allowing from one-eighth to one-tenth of their approximate value; pays for them in hard coin of the realm, then immediately the silver goes into the melting-pot, which stands ready in a bed of glowing charcoal. Stones are deftly extracted from jewellery, and the gold is treated the same way as the silver.

The ingots of gold and silver, together with the stones, are then taken by the 'fence' himself, or a confidential agent, to some part of the Continent—generally Holland, Belgium, or Germany—where there is a ready market for them amongst unprincipled traders. In the case of very large and very fine stones they are sent direct to India or Persia, where, of

course, the 'fence' must have agents. It will thus be seen that, without organisation and system, this illegal traffic could not be carried on. Of course it does not always follow that the cracksman sells the stolen goods to the 'fence,' for, knowing as he does that he only gets a very small proportion of the value, he tries to obtain more by pawning them or selling them to private individuals. But this is such a risky mode of disposal, and so frequently leads to detection, that it is generally beginners and greenhorns who resort to it.

I hope I have now made it clear to the reader that the difficulty of getting a conviction against the 'fence' is the difficulty of getting actual proof, such as can be accepted in law. For thieves will suffer almost any punishment rather than 'split' on the 'fence,' while it is a very rare thing for a 'fence' to keep stolen property on his premises many hours together. In the case of gold, silver, and jewels, he has a secret hiding-place so cunningly contrived that it defies discovery by the police.

In the case of the robbery I am dealing with I knew that big Scottie, who had been convicted, must have been in league with a 'fence,' and in trying to devise some means of getting to know who this was I hit upon the idea of visiting the thieves' kitchen in the New Cut. I was too well acquainted with the ways and habits of thieves not to know that there were possibilities of learning something of value if I mixed with the pariahs as one of them. Much of the success that has attended me in my profession has been due to my ability and willingness to assume disguises, and to suffer inconvenience and discomfort for the time being. I have always gone upon the

principle that, to hunt well one must be intimately acquainted with the habits of the animals to be hunted. And so I have made the peculiarities of criminals a close study; I have learned something of the form their craft and cunning takes; I know their jargon and argo, and how they live and act towards each other in their haunts. No man who does not know something of these things can possibly be a successful detective. I must say, however, I was peculiarly fortunate in my visit to the thieves' lodging in the New Cut, and that an unusual turn of luck served me by putting the 'Boss' in my way. Necessarily I had to use some deception in order to draw him, but I must maintain that that was well justified by the end I had in view. My next step now was to work up the pedigree of 'Heathcote & Son,' and get such evidence against them as would effectually put a stop to their nefarious business.

By a great deal of patient and persevering inquiring, and by following up the most minute clues, I ascertained that Moses Davis had been born in London, but, when about twelve years of age, he had been taken by an uncle to the Hague, where he resided for twelve years, and came under the notice of the police for various nefarious practices. At last, when the country had become too hot to hold him, he returned to London and became a 'receiver,' and a trainer of young thieves, and in this capacity he brought himself under the notice of the London police. But, when they showed their anxiety to become more closely acquainted with him, he suddenly disappeared from his haunts and went to Berlin, where he remained some years, and suffered a term of imprisonment for forgery.

Soon after his release he once more returned to London in company with his son, who was about four or five-and-twenty. For a year or so after he had once more settled in the British Metropolis he would seem to have lived in a very obscure way, and no information was forthcoming with regard to his conduct during that period. But that he was not indifferent during that time to what was going on in London was proved by his presenting himself one morning at the office of the firm of lawyers who were trying to find the heir to the property known as Murder Buildings, and making an offer to them to rent one of the houses on a yearly tenancy. He gave his name as Arthur Heathcote, and stated that he had been in business in Berlin as a commission agent, but had not been altogether successful. He offered to pay a whole year's rent in advance, and as the lawyers could not resist the temptation of this offer, they closed with him, and in due time the notorious Moses Davis and his son blossomed forth as 'Arthur Heathcote & Son, commission agents.'

So much did I learn of this interesting character, but let me state that I kept my own secret for the time being, and did not let it be known that Mr. Arthur Heathcote was the rascally Moses Davis, 'receiver,' thief-trainer, and thief. My business now was to get sufficient evidence against him that would ensure his conviction as a receiver of stolen property, and I knew that that was the most difficult part of the whole business, for I could not go to him myself with stolen property and ask him to buy it, nor could I consort with thieves who had stolen property to sell, as the law would not tolerate that. Nevertheless, I was resolved to have 'Messrs. Heathcote

and Son' somehow or another, and to stop their infamous trade. At last I resolved to call upon them, so as to gain some personal knowledge of them. I perhaps need scarcely say that I did not call in my capacity of detective, but attired in a well-worn frock coat, a rusty chimney-pot hat, with the expression of my face altered by smoke-coloured spectacles; and carrying a small hand-bag, such as are used by lawyers and city men, I presented myself at Heathcote and Son's business premises. I found that one of the rooms had been fitted up as an office. There was a counter, a desk, a stool or two, some pens and ink, and a few letter and day books.

As I entered a young man came from an inner room, and his Jewish origin was so clearly traceable in his cast of face that I had no difficulty in recognising Mr. Davis's son. He was rather slovenly dressed, had small, restless, beady eyes, and a wicked, crafty expression generally.

'Are you Mr. Arthur Heathcote?' I asked.

'No; I'm Mr. Arthur Heathcote's son. What do you want?'

'I want Mr. Arthur Heathcote.'

'Well, he ain't here at present.'

'Where is he?'

'Well, I don't know that you have any business to ask that question,' said this vulgar young man, with a sneer.

'Oh, indeed. It's a pity Mr. Arthur Heathcote does not leave a more agreeable person to represent him during his absence,' I said, pointedly. 'You must have rather a curious class of customers to deal with since you haven't yet learned the rudiments of politeness.'

He did not seem to like this, and scowled at me angrily, and said with a snap—

‘Why don’t you state your business?’

‘I told you I wanted Mr. Arthur Heathcote. Your father, I presume.’

‘Yes, my father. Well, he’s not here.’

‘So you said before. But when will he be here?’

‘I don’t know. Perhaps not for a few days.’

‘He’s out of town, then?’

‘Yes.’

‘Umph! That’s unfortunate,’ I said, musingly, and with an air of keen disappointment, while I watched young Davis through my smoked spectacles. Nevertheless, I was not disappointed, for I thought that, cunning as this young fellow was, he might be trapped into some admission that would tell against him. I saw him look at me scrutinisingly, and at last he said in a milder tone to that he had hitherto used—

‘Well, as the old man’s not here you can’t see him. But I’m his representative; you may safely confide your business to me if it concerns the firm.’

‘It does concern the firm,’ I answered quickly.

‘Very well, then, I represent the firm.’

For some moments I acted as if I could not make up my mind what to do. I assumed a very thoughtful attitude, and stroked my beard after the manner of one who ponders deeply. Then I moved uneasily about, and at last I asked—

‘You do commission business, don’t you?’

‘Yes, all kinds.’

‘That is, you buy and sell on commission, I suppose?’

‘Yes. Are you a buyer or seller?’

‘A seller.’

‘Well, what do you wish to trade?’

‘White metal,’ I answered, never taking my eyes off his face. I saw an almost imperceptible smile display itself about his mouth, a smile that seemed plainly to say, ‘I know your little game, old man. You needn’t try to deceive me.’

‘What do you mean by white metal?’ he asked with a cunning look in his eyes.

‘Silver.’

‘Silver; then why didn’t you say so at once?’

‘I thought you would have understood what I meant.’

‘What made you think that?’ (this very pointedly).

‘Oh, I had no particular reason for thinking so,’ I answered carelessly.

‘Are you in the trade?’ he next asked.

‘What trade?’ I asked with a charming assumption of innocence—of ignorance, any way, of his meaning.

‘Why, the silver trade.’

‘Oh, dear, no. I go in for all sorts of things—anything, in fact, that will bring in the coin.’

‘You must be a pretty knowing sort of a fellow,’ he remarked.

‘Well, I fancy I know a thing or two.’

‘Then I wish you would come to the point and tell me what you really want, if you really know your own business.’

‘Oh, yes, I know that.’

‘You say you’ve got some silver to sell?’

‘Yes.’

‘Any quantity of it?’ he asked.

‘A fairish amount.’ As I showed no disposition to go on with the conversation, he displayed some irritability again as he said—

‘Why don’t you come to the point, man, and state plainly what it is you want?’

‘I’ve told you what I want. I want to sell some silver, and I came here expecting to see your father.’

‘Were you recommended to him?’ he asked quickly.

‘His name was mentioned to me,’ I replied cautiously, ‘as a likely person to do business with me. But as he is not here now, if you will tell me when he will be here I will come again.’

‘He may not be here for three or four days yet, perhaps even longer than that, for he is in Antwerp at present.’

‘Antwerp!’ I exclaimed, pricking up my ears. ‘Could you give me his address in Antwerp?’

For some moments the young fellow seemed rather puzzled what to do, and, cunning and artful as he was, he did not seem equal to the occasion. I therefore determined to get behind his barrier of caution, such as it was, and though it was clear there was no other person within earshot, I leaned over the counter and whispered in a mysterious manner—

“Look here, cully, it’s all right. I can put a good thing in his way, and must see him. My business won’t keep.”

‘Why don’t you tell me what it is, then?’ he said, displaying some anxiety.

‘No, I won’t do that. I prefer to see your father, and if you give me his address I’ll start for Antwerp to-night.’

Again and again did young Davis try to get out of me what my business was, and what had sent me; but I was inflexible, and fenced his questions in a manner that, so far from raising his suspicions, was calculated to inspire him with confidence in me. But I was

careful not to mention anything about stolen goods. My remarks were ambiguous, but so framed that his inference could scarcely be any other than that I was anxious to dispose of a large quantity of ill-gotten gains. At last, when he found I would not yield, he said—

‘Well, when I last heard from the old man he was staying at the Hotel des Flandres.’

‘At Antwerp?’

‘Yes. But perhaps he’s not there now, for he was going to Brussels.’

My plans were soon formed. I did not waste any more time with the son, but, merely remarking that I should, no doubt, see him again, I wished him good day and left, and I laughed in my sleeve as I thought how well he had played into my hands.

That night I started for Antwerp, feeling sure that Mr. Davis was not in Antwerp on legitimate business, and I was resolved to find out what his business was if mortal man could do so. I was armed with official particulars of Moses Davis *alias* Arthur Heathcote’s career, and I also carried with me an official letter to the chief of the Antwerp police.

It was a clear, warm morning as I entered the River Scheldt, and I was elated at the prospect of being able to stop old Mo. Davis’s shameful trade. I had no eye for the picturesqueness that meets the visitor who travels by boat that sixty-two miles of river, from its mouth to the quaint old town of Antwerp, with its tall and curiously built houses, on many of which the Spaniards have left their mark. My mind was preoccupied with my mission, and my eagerness to stop the career of the old rascal would not allow me to think of anything else. As soon as

ever I could get on shore, I jumped into a cab, and drove to the Hotel des Flandres, and to my delight learned that Moses Davis, under the name of Arthur Heathcote, was staying there. My next step was to place myself in communication with the chief of police and present my letter. That functionary received me very graciously, and having listened patiently to my story about the interesting stranger then within the gates of the old city, he sent for one of his staff, who, he informed me, was one of the sharpest detectives on the Continent, and knew almost every notorious character in Europe, to say nothing of those located within Antwerp itself. This person's name was Gaspard Bompard, a most extraordinary individual. He was only about five feet high, but thick set, and a suggestiveness about him of enormous strength. Indeed, I very soon learnt that his strength was almost phenomenal. He was, I think, the ugliest man I ever saw in my life, and surely no human being ever more closely resembled a monkey than he did. And yet he was married to a charming woman, who was as handsome as he was ugly, and he was the father of twelve children, all of whom were living. He was possessed of only one eye, the other one having been gouged out by a ruffian whom Bompard was endeavouring to arrest. That one eye saw more, however, than tens of thousands of people see with both their eyes. Nothing seemed to escape him. His powers of observation and quickness of sight were simply marvellous. In spite of his somewhat forbidding appearance, I soon found that he was really a good fellow and a most agreeable companion, for he was full of witticisms, and had an inexhaustible fund of anecdote and story. But, perhaps,

not the least remarkable trait in his character was his systematic and business-like habits. As soon as he learnt my mission he requested me to accompany him to his house, and there he took from his bookcase one of a number of manuscript volumes, his own compilation, in which he had a record of criminals who had figured in the courts in various parts of Europe. Each volume was accurately indexed, and with very little searching he found a record of '*Moses Davis. Religion, Jew. Origin, English. Place of birth, London. Lived for some years with a relative in the Hague. Arrested by the police for illicit trafficking, but escaped. Supposed to have returned to London. Subsequently he resided in Berlin under the name of Ephraim Cohen, was arrested there in — for forgery, and suffered five years' imprisonment. Not known what became of him after that.*'

I was able to supply the missing links of the man's career from the time he left Berlin and returned to the British metropolis, and then Bompard exclaimed—

'You may depend upon it he has come here to trade with a rascal—a Jew also—by name Maurice Abraham, who buys stolen goods from abroad. He confines himself to jewellery and gold and silver, and he does a very large business indeed. We know all this, but hitherto we have not been able to get our claws upon him, for you will well understand the difficulties in the way of proving transactions of this kind are very great. But if you will take upon yourself the responsibility and risk of swearing an information against Moses Davis to the effect that, to the best of your belief, he came here to sell the proceeds of the robbery you speak of, we will have Maurice Abraham's house searched, and the possibilities are

we may get sufficient evidence to warrant an arrest of both men.'

It did not take me long to make up my mind what to do. That was to swear the necessary information. And that being done, and after I had furnished the Antwerp police with a list of the stolen things, a *posse* of police proceeded to Abraham's house, and I accompanied them. The search was thorough and systematic, and brought to light a large quantity of property that there was strong reason for thinking was stolen. Some of this property consisted of roughly cast ingots of gold and silver. But what interested me more was the finding in an iron box, which Abraham was compelled to open, some of the identical jewellery of which I had a list as having been stolen from the house in London, and for which Big Scottie and his companions were suffering penal servitude. The Jew was asked to account for the presence of this. He made various statements, and prevaricated very much; but at last, under great pressure, and finding that the truth was out and could not be gainsaid, he confessed having bought it from Arthur Heathcote, but protested that he did not know it to be stolen property. Of course the protest did not serve him, and as there was now direct evidence of the trade he was carrying on he was arrested, and an hour later the police, much to my delight, had secured Moses Davis, who was at once lodged in gaol. As the formalities preceding his extradition would occupy quite a fortnight, I hurried back to London and secured a warrant for the arrest of the son. Then I went to Murder Buildings, in company with four constables, to secure him.

Never shall I forget the look of utter despair that

came into his face as he realised his position, and no less remarkable was the look of ferocious hatred with which he regarded me.

‘I will have your life for this!’ he hissed in his impotent rage.

I merely smiled, and told him that cunning in the long run generally outleapt itself, and that it would, no doubt, be some considerable time before he would have the chance of taking my life.

This retort seemed to render him as fierce as a freshly-caught hyæna, and he had to be handcuffed to two policemen. He and his father had so long carried on their shameful business without being brought to justice that they had come to think, no doubt, that the law couldn’t reach them; but the precious pair of scoundrels were trapped at last, and the sudden realisation of the mistake they had made was well calculated to madden them.

Having sent young Davis to the station in a cab, I remained behind with two constables to search the premises, and we conducted that search in such a thorough and systematic way that it seemed as if nothing of consequence could have escaped. Nevertheless, for some time we found nothing likely to be of service as evidence against the prisoners. The wily rascals had apparently been at pains to hide all trace of their calling. At last, however, we were rewarded. My attention was attracted to a large square of the flag pavement in the cellar, which struck me as having recently been moved. On tapping this stone it gave off a hollow sound. We, therefore, raised it, not without difficulty, for it was heavy, and we then found that it masked a neatly-built brick pit, about six feet long, three broad, and three deep. Here were cruci-

bles, ladles, ingot moulds, a charcoal furnace, and a supply of charcoal, with an ingenious pair of circular bellows, worked with a handle like a hurdy-gurdy. This pair of bellows was used, obviously, for generating great heat in the charcoal furnace when the melting process was going on. But a more important discovery than this was a wooden box about a foot and a half square, and lined with block tin. The box contained a most valuable collection of precious stones of all kinds that had evidently been removed from jewellery. There were gold watches and several gold and silver ingots, besides a small old-fashioned gold casket set with precious stones. We subsequently found that this casket was a family heirloom. It belonged to the period of Henry VIII., and for over two hundred years had been in possession of the representatives of one family, from whom it had been stolen a few months previously. Why Davis and his son had not extracted the stones and put the gold in the melting-pot it is difficult to say; but probably they hoped some day to sell it at a large figure to some Eastern potentate, for it was just the sort of thing to take the fancy of a semi-civilised monarch. As it was, it was restored, after a time, to its original owner, who was delighted to get it back.

Three weeks after young Davis's arrest I brought his father under an extradition warrant from Antwerp to London, and the two worthies having been committed for trial, I was enabled to accumulate such evidence against them that the old man got a life sentence, and the son twenty years, and the Metropolis was thus rid of this Precious Pair of Scoundrels.

Of Murder Buildings it remains for me to say that for four or five years ruin, melancholy, and desolation

continued to hang over them, their evil reputation being enhanced by the unmasking of the vile trade carried on by ‘Messrs. Arthur Heathcote & Son, commission agents.’ But at last an heir was found in the person of the grandson of the youngest brother, who had gone to Australia, married, and died there, leaving a daughter, who married a poor man. This daughter sacrificed her life in bringing a son into the world, and this son it was who succeeded to the property. Soon after his claim had been thoroughly established the original buildings were razed to the ground, and in their place rose a stately pile, a portion of which is now a bank, the rest offices; and the rents derived from the property enable the fortunate owner to live in luxury and ease and ride in his carriage. From obscure poverty he has become a man of wealth, influence, and position. Such are the vagaries of fortune.

THE SHADOWER SHADOWED.

A REMINISCENCE.

I SUPPOSE there are few men, perhaps none at all, who, at some period of their career, have not had to confess themselves failures. I was a failure once. It is long ago, and since then I have been credited with a good many successes in hunting criminals down. So I can tell this story against myself without my equanimity being in any way disturbed.

It was in the pre-telephone days, and the birr and tingle of the bell and the monotonous 'Are you there?' had not added another disturbing element to one's life. After a busy day I had retired to my den, where, in dressing-gown and slippers, and ensconced in the easiest of easy chairs, I sat weaving pleasant fantasies, as I watched the smoke of a genuine Manilla curl gracefully ceilingwards. Suddenly my dreams were rudely dispelled by the abrupt opening of the door, and the appearance in the threshold of the humble Hibernian servitor who was supposed to keep my apartments clean and attend to my smallest wants. The name she had received at her baptism was Nora, but I could never call her anything but Bones, not from any fancied resemblance, be it understood, to the coloured 'Brudder Bones' of the Christy Minstrels, but because bones were a painfully prominent feature

of her anatomy. They were big bones, angular bones, full of knots and twists. If ever I twitted her about her skeleton-like appearance, she used to retort—

‘Shure, sor, thims natural,’ meaning the bones. ‘All me people is of the same build,’ by which remark she wished me to understand that her family were a fleshless race.

I knew nothing about her family, but it always occurred to me that this sweet creature had been built on a wrong principle. Nature seemed to have constructed her at odd times, and had evidently got confused as to the precise plan that should be followed. As a natural scarecrow hung in a corn-field Bones might have made her mark; but in any other capacity I always considered that she was a mistake. However, she professed great attachment to me, and so I tolerated her.

‘If ye plaze, sor,’ she exclaimed now as she burst unceremoniously on my privacy, ‘there’s a gint. as is waiting for yez below.’

‘I wish the gint. below would take you, Bones,’ I remarked somewhat irritably, though I fear the point of the remark was lost upon her, for she answered with an indignant toss of her triangular-shaped head—

‘Bedad, sor, I wudn’t have anything to do wid him if every hair av his head was gowd, for he’s the ugliest blackguard, axing your pardon, sor, that iver I’ve seen. And, thanks be to the Lord, sor! I’m not so wanting in good looks meself that—’

‘No, Bones; you are a jewel,’ I said, cutting her short, for I knew that if I didn’t do so she would go on for an hour. ‘But now, tell me, who is the gint. below? Is he black?’

‘Divil a bit of black, sor. He is a kind of pea-green.’

‘Ah, the gentleman below is generally supposed to be black. But what does the fellow want?’

‘Shure, sor, I don’t know.’

‘Well, what is his name?’

‘I don’t belave he’s got a name, for I kep’ on axing him, and he said it didn’t matter about his name; but he wanted to see yez very pertickular.’

‘Very well, then, you can show him up.’

So Bones retired, and a minute or two later the door was once more thrown open, and the sweet creature announced in a strident voice—‘The gint. from below.’

I must confess my first impression of the ‘gint.’ was far from favourable, and I saw at once why Bones had described him as being pea-green, for his complexion approximated more closely to that hue than any other. Over one eye he wore a patch, and the other eye had a twist in it. His mouth was extensive, and his ears had something of an asinine quality about them. When Bones described him as being ugly she spoke unadulterated truth, for I do believe he was the ugliest man I ever saw.

‘Good evening, guv’nor,’ he said, as he twisted a billycock uneasily about in his hands, while I looked at him, took his size, and measured him up from top to bottom, and flattered myself that I had thoroughly gauged him.

‘Well, what’s your business?’ I inquired, by no means pleased with the man or his manner. Bones still remained at the door, and I saw that it was as much as she could do to keep her countenance as she regarded this unprepossessing creature. I should

mention that he had a large bald patch on the top of his head, and the rest of his cranium was fringed with what I should think was the fiercest red hair that ever grew on human skull. Then, as to his dress, it was no less notable than the man himself. It consisted of thick lace boots, cord trousers two or three inches too short, a black waistcoat with white spots on it, a black velveteen coat, and a white choker; so that the fellow's general appearance was suggestive of the peregrinating psalm-smiter, or the court and alley gospel tub-thumper. In answer to my inquiry, he jerked his bludgeon-shaped thumb over his shoulder in the direction of Bones, the signification of which act I at once understood, and I told Bones she might retire; and as she closed the door behind her I heard her break into a loud guffaw.

‘That woman ain’t got much manners,’ remarked my strange visitor with a supreme disregard for grammar and polished speech.

‘Well, come now, what’s your business?’ I demanded again in an acidulated tone, for I felt very displeased, and did not like to hear him say anything disrespectful of Bones, for whom I had a high regard, despite her lack of flesh.

‘You are Dick Donovan?’ he asked with easy self-assurance.

‘I am.’

‘And you are a detective?’

‘Yes, that’s my calling.’

Here my gentleman dived a hand into the breast-pocket of his coat, and produced a card the size of an ordinary playing-card, on which was written in a fairly good round hand—

‘Mr. BILL SMITHERS,
‘(Ex-cracksman),
‘Evangelical Street Preacher,
‘Sheffield.’

As I read this, and looked at the one-eyed, big-mouthed, long-eared, bald-headed, red-haired, rusty-voiced specimen before me, I smiled as I remarked—

‘So you are Mr. Smithers, the converted house-breaker, who joined the Hallelujah Band in Sheffield, and who has been held up by that body as a living example of the converts they can make out of the most unlikely material?’

‘The same, guv’nor,’ answered Mr. Smithers with a grin, which so distorted his face that it would have served admirably as a model for a Gargoyle.

‘Then, perhaps, you will now inform me, Mr. Smithers, to what I am to attribute the honour of this visit?’

‘Certainly I will, guv’nor. You won’t mind my sitting down?’ and he suited the action to the word.

‘Oh, pardon my oversight!’ I said. ‘I am so seldom honoured with the presence of such a distinguished visitor that I am afraid I’ve somewhat lost my presence of mind.’

‘That’s hirony, guv’nor, ain’t it?’ he remarked with another grin.

‘I suppose you mean irony? Well, it depends how you take it. But come, let us to business.’

‘Right you are, guv’nor.’ He seemed to make a point of calling me guv’nor. ‘My business is this yere—I’ve come to offer you my services.’

‘Offer your services?’ I said with an incredulous laugh.

‘Yes. For two months you’ve been a trying to nab

the covey what stole the plate from Mr. Jones's, the member o' Parliament, out at Hampstead.'

'How do you know?' I asked quickly, and becoming interested at once. Mr. Jones was an exceedingly wealthy M.P., who lived at Hampstead on his own estate, and a little more than two months previously his house had been broken into during the absence of himself and family, and a large quantity of valuable silver articles had been stolen. During those two months I had used every endeavour to get a clue to the burglar, but had utterly failed, much to my annoyance. All the haunts of vice in the metropolis had been visited, but without result, and I began to despair of capturing the thief.

'Never mind, guv'nor, how I know; but, you see, I do know,' he answered, once more screwing his face up into Gargoyle-like ugliness.

'Well, go on,' I said, with suppressed excitement, and beginning to regard the fellow with more respect, and to be less irritated by his ugliness and impertinent familiarity.

'Of course you would like to cop the fellow what done it?'

'Of course I should,' I answered with emphasis.

'Then I'm the man that can give you the straight tip.'

'You?' Here I opened my eyes in pleased amazement, and was almost disposed to seize the fellow's hand and wring it.

'Yes, guv'nor. You see, I goes a-preaching in the slums now, a-trying to convert pore lost thieves and murderers, and in a place I was a-visiting the other day I heerd as it was Yankee Jim as done the job at Mr. Jones's house.'

'Yankee Jim——'

‘Well, that’s what his pals call him, because he’s been across the herring pond two or three times; but his proper name’s Jim Wickins.’

I had up to that moment never heard of Jim Wickins, or ‘Yankee Jim,’ but I did not deem it prudent to let my visitor know of that fact, so I remarked—

‘Oh, yes, I know Yankee Jim.’

‘You know him?’ exclaimed the visitor quickly.

‘Well, that is, I know him by repute.’

‘Just so,’ and once more Mr. Smithers smiled his fascinating smile.

‘But are you sure he’s the man that committed the burglary?’

‘Sure! Just as sure as I’m talking to you, guv’nor.’

‘Then I’ll have Jim under lock and key before I’m a week older.’

‘Well, look you here, guv’nor. If I wasn’t converted, I’d a bet you a tenner that you won’t.’

‘Why?’ I asked sternly.

‘Why? Because Jim’s one of the smartest dodgers in this country, and the detective ain’t born that could take him.’

‘Oh, indeed!’ I said, with a scornful laugh. ‘Now that you have been good enough to give me the information, I’m prepared to stake my reputation that his capture is merely a question of days.’

‘May be so if I help you.’

‘You?’

‘Yes, that’s what I’ve come for. I’ve knowed Jim, I may say, all my life; afore I was converted me and him used to do our biz together, and I tell you, guv’nor, he’s that smart he’d take your eyebrows off without your knowing.’

‘Then he must be smart,’ I sneered.

‘You take my word for it that he is. Well now, it’s this way. Jim ain’t half a bad sort o’ fellow, and I believe he can be converted same as I am, so I’m going to give him into your hands; and when he’s done his bit, I’m a-going to work on him, and if he ain’t like wax in my hands then my name ain’t Bill Smithers.’

‘Well, I certainly appreciate your philanthropic motives,’ I answered, ‘and in carrying out your programme you will be rendering a service to the State, as well as bringing a lost sheep to the fold. Now, tell me; where is Jim to be found?’

‘Ah, that’s it; that’s where my services will come in. You see Jim’s that ’cute that you might be alongside of him and never know it.’

‘Then he must be ’cute,’ said I with a contemptuous smile, and feeling indignant that this fellow should think that I could be so easily hood-winked by a common burglar.

‘He *is* ’cute, guv’nor. His professional brethren calls him——’ Here Mr. Bill Smithers ran his knobby fingers through his fiery red hair as if he had got into a mental difficulty.

‘Can I help you?’ I asked.

‘What was the name of that bloke—he was a god, you know, what used to change hisself?’

‘What—do you mean Proteus?’ I said, with a laugh.

‘Ah, yes, that’s him. Well, Yankee Jim’s pals says he’s a Proteass because he can change hisself so.’

‘Umph!’ He’s very clever, no doubt; but he’ll find, perhaps, that the law is cleverer than he is. But you

have not told me in what part of the world Mr. Jim Wickins is sojourning at the present moment.'

'No, I haven't, guv'nor; but I'm going to tell you now. He's in Liverpool.'

'In Liverpool! Whereabouts there?'

'I think he's a-staying with his old mother in a street off Scotland Road. I don't know the name of the street, nor the number of the house, but I can find it, so you'll have to take me with you, guv'nor, if you want to nab Jim.'

This proposal somewhat startled me, for Mr. Bill Smithers was not a gentleman whose company I should care to be seen in. I therefore suggested that the business might be managed without his putting himself to the inconvenience to accompany me, and I ventured to hint to Mr. Smithers that, as it was probable preaching, however gratifying to his awakened sense of right, was not as financially profitable as he could perhaps desire, I should not fail to see that he received some substantial recognition for his valuable services after Yankee Jim had been captured. Thereupon Mr. Smithers clapped his hands upon his breast and turned his crooked eye up to the ceiling; at least, I think he did, but, as a matter of fact, one could not be quite sure where the eye was turned, and as something like a benign expression spread itself over his ugly face he said—

'No, guv'nor, I ain't a cove of that sort. I'm a doing this out o' kindness to Jim. You see, he's got an old mother, and a wife and two youngsters, and if his career ain't stopped, he'll come to the gallows as sure as eggs is eggs. When he's been convicted for this burglary, and has done his time, I intends to tackle him, and get him to join the Hallelujah Band.

'That's what I'm a-aiming at, cos you see it's me dooty to try and save them as is gone wrong, and I tell you straight, guv'nor, I loves Jim better nor my own brother.' Here the visitor wiped a tear, real or imaginary, from his crooked eye.

I must confess that Smithers' apparent disinterestedness, so far as money was concerned, impressed me in his favour, and to such an extent was this the case that I offered him a Manilla, and invited him to taste some exceedingly good Scotch I had; but he put up his hands in a deprecating way, and said he had given up 'all them kind o' wices,' which assertion impressed me still more deeply. The result was that after some further conversation I arranged to meet Mr. Smithers the following day at Euston Railway Station, and proceed to Liverpool in his company in search of Jim.

When he had taken his departure, Bones put in an appearance again, and as she spread the cloth for my evening meal she said—

'Well, sor, if ever I saw a blackguard, that fellow that's just gone's the one.'

'He *was*, Bones,' I answered reprovingly, and speaking in the past tense, 'but now he's converted, and is a preacher, and not at all a bad fellow.'

'A pracher! Arrah, be me sowl, but that bates all. What does he prache?'

'Well, he preaches against all sorts of evil and sin, and tries to convert people.'

'Convart,' exclaimed Bones; 'convart,' she repeated, 'spluttering with laughter; 'and is he trying to convart you, sor?'

'Bones,' I said severely, 'put the supper on the table at once, and then betake yourself to the lower

regions. Your familiarity is objectionable. You forget yourself.'

'Oh, very well, sor; but I only axed the question.'

'Then don't ax any more questions. I'm not sure that I want converting. I'm not a burglar nor a forger, nor anything of that kind.'

'And is that gint. a burglar and forger, and that kind o' thing?' she asked pointedly.

I did not answer this question, but expressed by my severe looks that I was displeased.

Bones made no further remark. She set the supper in silence and then retired, much to my relief, for I wanted to think over the good luck that seemed to have come in my way. I was a young man, and might say I was on the threshold of my career. The robbery at Mr. Jones's house had been of a very daring character, and I had received instructions to try and capture the thieves. Success on my part meant very much to me, while failure would, I knew, damage what little reputation for cleverness I had earned. There was the strongest possible reason for thinking that the stolen plate had been concealed by the thieves in a somewhat extensive plantation that adjoined Mr. Jones's estate. The result was I had had three men watching that plantation day and night ever since the burglary, for though I had myself spent days in searching the wood, I had not been able to find the hiding-place of the silver, but that it was there we were pretty certain, and we felt equally certain that the thief or thieves would come back for it sooner or later. So far, this surmise had not proved correct, and it seemed as if there was to be no capture after all.

Now Bill Smithers was a somewhat noted character, for the Hallelujah Band was the forerunner of the

Salvation Army, but confined its operations to the Midland counties, Sheffield being its head-quarters. The leaders of the band had got hold of Smithers, who had been a daring thief, and, having 'converted' him, they carted him round the country, and, though an ignorant and illiterate man, he was said to have the power of a certain rough and fiery eloquence that told mightily on the class of people he had to deal with. He had thus earned for himself a considerable amount of renown. As regards Yankee Jim, I found on inquiries he was posted at headquarters as one of the 'dangerous classes.' He was described as an Englishman who had spent some time in America, but no conviction in England had been proved against him. The information about him had been sent from America, but no one in the London force knew anything at all about him from personal knowledge.

It will readily be understood how elated I was as I saw that I should, in all probability, have the satisfaction of bringing this rascal to justice; and I need scarcely say that, as I thought the matter over, it seemed to me that, after all, the plate could not have been hidden in the wood, for Yankee Jim would not have gone to Liverpool and left it behind him. So, early the following morning, I gave orders that the watchers at the plantation could be withdrawn; and I made known to the chief at the 'Yard' that I had got on the trail of the burglar, and hoped to be able to announce his capture within twenty-four hours.

'Well, it will be a feather in your cap, Donovan,' said the chief. But how did you get the information?

'Ah, you must pardon me, sir,' I answered with an air of self-assurance, 'but that is my own little secret.'

'Oh, certainly,' he answered, 'as long as you bring

law-breakers to justice, we need not trouble ourselves about the means you employ. Well, I wish you good luck, and if you capture the thief and recover Mr. Jones's plate, you may depend upon it it will put you a considerable way up the ladder.'

'Thank you, sir,' I said. 'I hope it will. Of course I cannot say anything about the recovery of the plate, but the arrest of the burglar is certain, I think.'

'That's all right,' replied the chief. 'The sooner the better.'

As I had some time to spare I returned to my lodgings for my portmanteau, and as Bones opened the door for me she said—

'If you plaze, sor, the gint. as come last night—him as does the praching—has been agin, and wants yez to be at the station to catch the four o'clock train, as he cannot go by the other train, bekase he's got some business on hand.'

This was rather annoying, as we had arranged to start at twelve, and naturally I was all anxiety to be off. However, there was no help for it, and I had to restrain my patience until the afternoon. A quarter of an hour before the departure of the train I was at the station, and found Bill Smithers there. He was more fearfully and wonderfully got up than on the previous evening, for his cranium was surmounted by a chimney-pot hat two or three sizes too small, and surrounded with a deep band of crape. He wore a white choker and a very rusty black frock coat, with well frayed black trousers ever so much too short. He'd 'high-low' boots and white stockings, the stockings showing over the tops of his boots, owing to the shortness of his trousers. To complete his remarkable costume, he wore black cotton gloves several sizes too

large. He carried with him a polished leather hand-bag that seemed pretty weighty, so that I was led to inquire what he had in it, and he answered—

‘Oh, them’s me clothes and Bibles.’

‘Bibles!’

‘Yes. I’m a-going to give them to the thieves in Liverpool.’

As the bag was a pretty bulky affair, the guard suggested that it should go into his van, but Bill objected, saying he preferred to look after its precious contents himself, and so he took it into the carriage and put it under his feet, and, as it seemed to me, he regarded it with the most affectionate interest the whole of the journey. Of course I paid Bill’s railway fare, besides supplying him with such creature comforts as are generally considered indispensable on a railway journey. On arriving at our destination my travelling companion delicately hinted that his inner man would be the better were it lined, and said something about Nature abhorring a vacuum. I was not slow to take the hint, and suggested dinner.

‘Well,’ said Bill thankfully, and smacking his lips, ‘I ain’t much of a eater, but I confess I likes me dinner; for, though I am converted, I still has little weaknesses of the flesh.’

I did not feel altogether comfortable in Bill’s company, for he attracted a great deal of attention by his remarkable costume—the green patch on one eye, the twist in the other, his pea-green complexion and fiery red hair, to say nothing of his dirty white stockings that so objectionably protruded themselves from beneath the frayed bottoms of his polished trousers. My *amour propre* was certainly not flattered, for I had no desire to be taken for one of this creature’s ‘con-

versions.' I was therefore about to dive into a restaurant close to the station, but, with a benign smile, Bill said he knew a first-class house, where as snug a dinner could be had as Liverpool could furnish. Although I made a mild protest, I had no alternative but to give in, and Mr. Smithers led the way to one of the best hotels in Lime Street, where, like one to the manner born, he marched into the coffee-room and, hanging his hat on a peg and drawing off his cotton gloves, he placed his precious bag of Bibles on a chair beside him, and as he sat down with an air of gratification, he said—

'Ah, this is comfort. Now what is it going to be?'

As I felt so thoroughly in his hands, I told him I could not do better than allow him to order the repast. He was not slow to avail himself of the permission, and I was astonished at the dinner he *did* order. There were soup, fish, flesh, fowl, and sweets, with a variety of vegetables and dessert. Then he rubbed his hands together and sighed gratefully, remarking that he didn't know when he had felt so hungry, and he supposed that the journey down from London was responsible for it.

As the waiter served the first course he inquired what wine we would like. I intended to have contented myself with a humble bottle of ale, and, as a mere matter of form, said to Bill—

'Of course you won't take anything?'

Mr. Smithers smiled. I shall never forget his smile. It was a thing well calculated to impress itself on anybody's memory. It was a smile that involved the whole of his features, including the crooked eye and the big ears. If one attempted to give a pictorial representation of that truly remarkable smile, people

would say that it was a gross exaggeration—that no one save a professional clown or a born contortionist could possibly twist his face into so many lines and wrinkles, and at the same time impart to the features such an expression of *knowingness*. But Bill did it, and his strange smile haunts me still.

‘Well, I tell you what it is guv’nor,’ he remarked confidentially as he untwisted his face, ‘I never in all my life felt so like a bottle of fizz as I do to-day. Now do you think it would be very outrageous for a converted one to so indulge the carnal appetite?’

For the first time I began to think that Bill was a consummate humbug; but, having regard to the service he was to render me, I felt I could not deny him, so I answered in a somewhat crestfallen manner—

‘Well, perhaps for once in a way it might be overlooked, though I think you ought to mortify the flesh rather than indulge it.’

‘True, true,’ said Bill with a sigh; ‘but I feel very weak to-day. After this I’ll say farewell to worldly pleasures.’

I saw I could not get out of it, so I ordered the champagne, and Bill ate, drank, and was merry. After the very sumptuous repast he leaned back in his chair and laid his hands on his waistcoat, saying it was wonderful what a ‘rewyving’ effect a good dinner had on a fellow. I had to admit that I felt very comfortable myself, and that one of my little weaknesses was a good dinner. Then Bill’s crooked eye rolled about, and his countenance assumed a lugubrious expression, as he said mournfully—

‘We ought not to feel so joyful when we consider the painful errand we are on.’

‘Perhaps not,’ said I; ‘but, then, remember that

after this Yankee Jim has served his time he is to be as wax in your hands, and you are to convert him. A lost sheep gathered to the fold is a matter for rejoicing over; and as you seem so sanguine about Jim's conversion let us regard this little feast as having been partaken of to specially mark Jim's change for the better.'

I knew, of course, that I was talking bunkum, but what did it matter? The man I was talking to was a humbug. I was convinced of it now, and so I was not very particular.

Having smoked a cigar, I told Bill that I thought the time for action had arrived, and I suggested that in order to prevent any possibility of Yankee Jim escaping, it might be advisable for me to go to the head station and secure the services of a couple of plain clothes policemen to accompany us to Scotland Road, which was an evil neighbourhood, and the resort of some of the worst characters to be found in Liverpool.

'Yes, it's not a bad idea,' replied Bill, looking very thoughtful and grave, 'but first of all I will see if I can find Jim. You see, he might not be at home; and if we were to go and he was not there, we should not catch him. Our presence in such a region would be sure to attract attention, and such is the freemasonry amongst these people that Jim to a dead certainty would be warned, and you might then as well try to catch a bird by putting salt on its tail as catch Jim.'

'Perhaps you are right,' I remarked, 'but you may depend upon it, if the fellow is in Liverpool, I'll have him.'

'He's in Liverpool—I'll take my oath to it!' ex-

claimed Bill with energy, 'but all the traps in the town won't catch him unless I deliver him into your hands.'

'Well, I wish you'd make haste and do it,' I said, 'for I am getting impatient.'

Mr. Smithers glanced up at the clock.

'It's eight o'clock,' he remarked. 'Now I'll go, and in exactly two hours' time you be at Lime Street Railway Station with the two bobbies, and I'll meet you there and report progress. If Jim's at home we'll go straight to his place, and if he isn't, you bet I'll know where he is. So by-by till we meet again.'

He buttoned his coat up, put on his rusty hat, and took his bag. I suggested he should leave it behind, but he said he would need the Bibles. Then he went out into the night; and, as rain was pouring down steadily, I addressed myself to another cigar and congratulated myself on my good fortune, for I was perfectly certain I should have secured Yankee Jim before many hours had fled.

Soon after nine I called for the bill and settled it. It was pretty stiff, but I did not begrudge the money. Then, hailing a cab I drove to the police station, where, making known my business, and showing my credentials and my warrant for Jim's arrest, two trustworthy and stalwart plain clothes constables were placed at my disposal. Of course I did not explain the *modus operandi* that was being pursued for Jim's capture. I simply said that I knew Jim was in Liverpool, and that I had been promised information that would enable me to arrest him at his house. So the constables and I went to the rendezvous, and promenaded up and down the departure platform where Bill Smithers had promised to meet me. When eleven

o'clock chimed out from the town clocks I was still waiting, but though I felt a little irritable and impatient I had no misgivings. At half-past eleven a change had come over me. The constables became inquisitive too, and annoyed me; but I was very reticent, and they learnt nothing. When the solemn hour of midnight tolled an uncomfortable sense of misgiving weighed upon me, and I returned to the station, and made some cautious inquiries about Yankee Jim, but was informed that they had never heard of such a character, so I retired disconsolate and heavy-hearted to my hotel.

I think I passed the worst night I had ever experienced, and at an early hour I set out to try and find some trace of Mr. Bill Smithers, but when the day was ended my quest had not been rewarded, and I felt then that I had been 'sold.' It was a bitter draught to swallow, but I had to gulp it down, and by that night's mail I returned to town. When I reported myself at headquarters I was asked if I had made an arrest. My answer was a monosyllabic

'No.'

'Not made an arrest!' exclaimed the chief in amazement. 'Why, you were sure of doing so. You don't mean you've failed?'

'Yes,' I answered sadly; 'I am bound to confess that I have failed. I fear somehow I got on to a wrong track. Anyhow, I have gained nothing by my journey to Liverpool, except experience.'

The chief was a little puzzled by my manner; but I was not disposed to enter into explanations then, and, taking my departure, I went straight to a telegraph office and wired to the headquarters of the Hallelujah Band at Sheffield to inquire if they could

tell me where Bill Smithers was. Soon the answer came back: 'He is here, where he has been for many weeks.'

'Has he not been in London the last few days?' I asked.

'No,' was the reply; 'he has not been out of Sheffield for the last three months.'

My spirits went down into my boots, for I knew then that I had been 'done brown.'

'Shure, sor, you're not looking well,' Bones remarked when I reached my home.

'Oh, go to the ——.' I am afraid I very nearly said something naughty, but checked myself in time, and added: 'No, I am not very well, Bones.'

'Begorra,' she exclaimed, 'it's that pea-green gint. what's done it. I knowed it. Didn't I tell you he was a blackguard? Bejabers, it's a moighty clever man what would desave me.'

'Bones,' said I with the air of a broken-hearted father reproving a wayward child, 'go downstairs to your den and smother yourself.'

She went downstairs, looking at me tearfully as she departed in sorrow, not in anger; but the latter part of my command she did not carry out. Three days later I received a letter bearing the Queenstown postmark. It was dated on board the Cunard steamer Scotia. The following is the letter. I have made no alteration either in the spelling or the grammar:—

'Dear Old Pal—

'I aint a ungreatful covey, so I rites to thank you for your kindness. You see wen I corled on you at your diggins I'd a been a watching of you for many days; and as I ad that nice little haul of old Jones'

silver a hidden in a oller tree in the wood alongside his ouse, I knowed I'd be copped if I went to get it. So says I to myself, says I, dick donovan will have to be kidded, and so as me and bill smithers had been pals in the rorty old days I gets myself up like him. Next mornin arter I chumed in with you I was a watching thim ere coves wat was a watching fur me at the wood, and I sees em go away. Then I got the metal out of the oller tree, and stows it in my bag, and you travild along with it to Livirpul. Then we had that rorty dinner, and, lor, ow I did injiy it, to bee shore. It was reel andsome of you to do the thing so liberhal, and I shall allers think of you with gratti-tood. At ten o'clock I was a-sailing down the Mercy in the Coonardur, bound fur the land o' the free, with me pore old muther and the missus and the kids. The missus had takin the births too days afore, so, when you gets this, we shall be on the billoy hocean a' injoyin' of oursel's. I 'ope this yeer few lynes will find you well, as they leeves me at prisint, so no more from your looving old pal, Yankee Jim, propper name Jim Wickins.'

I will not attempt to describe what my feelings were as I perused this precious document. I had been outwitted by as clever a scoundrel as ever the slums produced, but I confessed myself a failure and an ass.

It is needless to say Mr. Jones's plate was never recovered, nor was the thief ever captured. If the Atlantic cable had been in existence the ending to this little sketch would have been different. As it was, I held my peace, stood the chaff of my comrades, who, without knowing the truth, knew I had failed; ex-

plained to the persistent and inquisitive Bones that 'the gint. from below' had annoyed me, but as he had gone to another world, I should be all right soon. And gradually I recovered my spirits. It was the first and last time in the course of a long career that I was ever outshadowed.

CAUGHT IN A TRAP.

A THRILLING EXPERIENCE.

IN the early part of the same year as that in which I became an unwilling actor in the thrilling little drama the particulars of which I am now about to relate, a series of extensive frauds had been perpetrated on several well-known houses in London. It had been my duty to try and hunt the criminals down, and I got on the track of two men, whom I watched for a little while in order to make sure I was justified in arresting them. They were both Americans. At any rate they had come from America, and as they were not known to the police either on this side or the other side of the 'Herring Pond,' some caution and judgment had to be exercised before pouncing on them for fear of committing an error. Ostensibly they were partners in a business which they termed an 'English and American agency,' their object being to bring merchants of all kinds on both sides of the Atlantic into communication, as well as to sell goods on commission. This, however, as subsequently proved, was a mere blind, and both the gentlemen were engaged in transactions of a very different kind, which, if they could only have carried on uninterruptedly for a few years, would have enabled them to have retired with

a fortune. I was destined, however, to spoil their little game, but as soon as I got unmistakable evidence of their crime, one of the birds had flown. The other was arrested, and it soon became clear that the two men had worked out an extraordinary and systematic series of frauds, in which they must have had a considerable number of confederates. Every effort was made to secure the partner, but without avail, and the man in custody would reveal nothing. There was not a shadow of a doubt that they had possessed themselves of an exceedingly large sum of money, and it was very desirable that we should discover what they had done with it. But the man whom I had arrested absolutely declined to give the slightest information either about himself or those connected with him, and so we were baffled, and it was pretty evident the fugitive had carried off all the valuables, as well as papers and books. At any rate, not much was left behind that was likely to aid us, but I managed to prove one fraud against the prisoner, and he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment. Of course I was very much annoyed that the other principal had slipped through my fingers, and I confess that I did not entertain much hope of capturing him. About a fortnight after the man I had brought to book had been sentenced, I received a letter bearing the London postmark, which was worded as follows:—

‘From this day forth you are a marked man, and your death warrant is signed. The knife or the bullet will stop your career before you are many weeks older, and you will not have another chance of getting any more fellows sentenced.’

This letter did not affect me in the least. I had

often been threatened before, and I knew that threatened men live long. I even considered it a waste of time to try and find out who the stupid writer was; and so the subject passed out of my mind. On the morning of the 24th of December the daily papers announced that the previous night a man had been arrested in Liverpool on suspicion of being the partner of the convict then undergoing penal servitude for the great frauds, and that Mr. Dick Donovan, 'the well-known detective,' would start at once for Liverpool in order to identify the man, and bring him to London should he prove to be the person wanted. Of course we in the 'Yard' were already in possession of this information, and equally, of course, I had received instructions to go down to Liverpool, so that the papers were correct.

I was not very pleased at having to leave town on Christmas Eve, which I always liked to spend with my friends, and I said some harsh things about the chance that rendered my going away on this particular day necessary. However, there was no help for it, and I arranged to leave by the night train; for duty was duty, and could not be shirked.

It was a terribly bitter night. It had snowed during the day, and as the evening came on a severe black frost set in. When I reached the station I had about ten minutes to spare before the starting of the train, and so sauntered leisurely down the platform, hopeful that I might be able to get a compartment to myself; but that did not seem probable, for, being Christmas Eve, there were a great many people travelling. I had walked the length of the train, and was proceeding back when a gentlemanly-looking man, wearing kid gloves and a fur-trimmed overcoat,

stopped in front of me, and, politely raising his hat, said—

‘Excuse me, but I believe you are Mr. Donovan?’

‘That is my name,’ I answered; ‘but you have the advantage of me.’

‘Oh, well, my name is Richard Jack,’ he said with a smile. ‘I am a solicitor in the city. I know you well by sight, though I have never had any business with you. You are going to Liverpool, I believe, if the papers are correct.’

‘Yes, they are correct enough in this instance,’ I returned.

‘Then we’ll travel together if you don’t mind,’ he replied. ‘I’ve secured the corner of a first-class compartment, and tipped the guard.’

He seemed a very pleasant, affable gentleman, and so I expressed my willingness to become his travelling companion, and we moved towards the carriage he indicated. As we came to the door we noted that another man was seated in one corner of the compartment. He had on a big fur cap, the flaps pulled down about his ears; he wore a heavy overcoat, and had a rug wrapped round his knees.

‘Confound it!’ exclaimed Mr. Jack, ‘I thought we should have had the carriage to ourselves. Suppose we look for another?’

‘Oh, no,’ I said, ‘it doesn’t matter. Besides, the train is pretty full.’

At this moment the ticket-collector came along, so we took our seats, displayed our tickets, and in another minute the train was steaming out of the station. The man in the fur cap seemed to be already asleep, and was so muffled up that it was impossible to distinguish his features. Mr. Jack was a little

man, with a clean shaved face, and had he worn a white band round his neck he might have passed for a curate.

‘So you are going down to Liverpool to see if you can identify the man who has been arrested on suspicion of having been concerned in the great frauds?’ he remarked.

‘Yes,’ I answered shortly, not caring to discuss the matter with an utter stranger.

‘Well—I don’t think *you* will identify him,’ he said.

There was something in the way in which he uttered these words that caused me to look at him, and for the first time a suspicion flashed across my mind that my companion was not what he seemed to be. What that something was would be very difficult to define. Perhaps it was the emphasis he laid upon the *you*, or a fancied menace in his tone of speaking. But whatever it was my suspicions *were* aroused, and a heavy rug I had been in the act of wrapping about my person I placed on the seat again so as to have my limbs free. Then I glanced at the third man in the corner. He seemed to be sunk in profound sleep. Both windows were up, and were quite obscured with the condensed vapour. I tried to think that my suspicions were ill-founded, but they would not be shaken off, and I resolved to keep my eye on Jack, who sat opposite me, and anticipate any movement of attack that he might display. The train had already attained a high rate of speed, and I knew there was a long run before the first stopping place would be reached.

Presently my *vis-a-vis* took a flask from his coat pocket and asked me if I would have a drink.

I declined. He pressed me; I declined more em-

phatically; he pressed me more resolutely, and the manner in which he did this increased my suspicions. My persistent refusal annoyed him, and he said sharply—

‘You don’t suppose, Mr. Donovan, I want to poison you, do you?’

‘Well, I can’t tell,’ I said with a laugh. ‘It’s as well to be on the safe side. Why don’t you take a drink yourself?’ I asked as he restored the flask to his pocket.

‘Because I don’t want one,’ he growled.

‘We seem to be in accord, then, on one point,’ I remarked, ‘for I don’t want one either.’

He made no reply, but rove his arm through the arm-rest at the side of the window, and opened and shut his fingers five different times, in a manner that led me at once to the conclusion he was signalling to his confederate in the corner, for by this time I had made up my mind that the other man was a confederate, and that I was trapped. In about five minutes more the train plunged into a tunnel, and at that moment Jack sprang at me. My suspicions and his signals with his fingers had quite put me on my guard, and I was prepared. I, too, was on my feet before he gained any advantage, and, throwing my body forward, I struck him a tremendous blow with my fist on the forehead. It was a down blow, for I had raised my arm and brought it down like a hammer, as I was unable to strike from the shoulder owing to my cramped position; but that blow dropped him like an ox, and he fell in a heap on the seat.

This little scene had been enacted literally in far less time than it has taken me to describe it, for it was all a matter of brief moments. But the other

man had risen and seized me by the throat, and in a hoarse, deep voice, prefacing his remark with a tremendous oath, he said—

‘It was through you my brother got five years, and, by God, I’m going to have your blood for it.’

I knew now that it was a struggle for life. During the trial I learned that the fellow who was convicted had a brother, but we could get no trace of him, and now this villain and his co-partner in guilt had trapped me with a view to murdering me—firstly, probably, as an act of vengeance; and, secondly, to prevent me identifying the fellow who was in custody in Liverpool. But, thanks to the fact of my suspicions having been aroused so early, I was on my guard, and that had enabled me to stun one of my enemies. Naturally a powerful man, the desperateness of the situation seemed to give me additional power, and, swinging myself round with all my might against my antagonist, I caused him to stagger and almost lose his balance, which gave me a temporary advantage; but I saw that he was armed with a revolver, and I realised that he, too, was a powerful man. By a supreme effort he recovered himself. He had seized me by the throat with his left hand, and still retained his grip, digging his finger points into my throat. Putting the revolver right against my face he pulled the trigger, but the weapon missed fire. With a deep curse he pulled again, but with my elbow I managed to strike his arm. The barrel of the pistol was deflected, and the bullet went through the roof of the carriage. Before he could fire a third time I got his hand from my throat, and closed with him, and we both went down on the seat, though, unfortunately, I was underneath; and he struck me on the head

with the butt end of the revolver until blood gushed over my face.

Putting forth all my strength, I managed to regain my feet, and tried to get my hands round his throat. He prevented my doing that, however, but he lost his hold of the pistol—it fell at my feet, and I kicked it under the seat. Then we reeled against the door of the carriage, and the glass of the window was shattered to atoms, and the blast of cold air that rushed in refreshed and strengthened me, and, getting my right arm free, I struck my antagonist full in the face. Then in our fierce struggle we went down on the seat again, but this time he was under, though he managed to seize my wrists, and he twisted his legs about me, so that I was powerless. The same cold blast of air that revived me had also restored the man I had stunned, and he threw himself on me.

‘Knife the cur!’ gasped the man I had down on the seat; ‘knife him, Bill.’

I was beginning to feel slightly faint from the effects of the blow with the pistol, while the blood had flowed down over my eyes to such an extent that I could hardly see. But I was determined to sell my life as dearly as possible, and, releasing my hold of the prostrate man, I turned and struck Bill twice in the face, first with my right fist, then with my left. Throwing my body against him, I knocked him down; then I sprang at the opposite door—the right-hand one facing the engine; quick as thought I let the window down, and tried to reach the communication cord. But my enemies were too quick for me, though, luckily for me, the limited space cramped their movements; but the little man, ‘Jack,’ as he had called himself, ‘Bill,’ as his com-

panion had styled him, flung himself on me and, getting his arm round my throat, tried to garotte me, but I hurled him with tremendous force against the back of the carriage. I realised then that the other man was on his knees on the floor, and I guessed in an instant he was trying to recover the revolver from under the seat. His head was towards me, and I dealt him a tremendous blow with my foot that seemed to stun him. But Bill had recovered himself by this time, and with a snort like that of a savage animal, he once more threw himself on me, and we went down together on top of the other man.

For some moments—they seemed minutes to me, and long minutes, too—we writhed, groaned, panted, snorted, twisted, and wrenched, each with desperate endeavour to gain an advantage. The train was rushing along at tremendous speed, and the roar that it made, coupled with the fact that all the windows of the carriages were closed on account of the intense cold, prevented the people in the next compartment from hearing anything of the death struggle that was going on, for truly it was a death struggle. I knew that these ruffians were bent on taking my life, and in self-defence I should not hesitate to slay them. If I could but have recovered the revolver the odds would have been no longer against me, but it seemed impossible. Bill had now pulled himself together again and struck me about the face, but his cramped position prevented his blows being effectual, and with a great upheaving of my body I threw him off, regained my feet, and literally jumped on Bill. The other man struggled up, seized me, and once again we were locked in a deadly embrace. His aim was to

throttle me, but I succeeded in keeping his hands from my throat. I was conscious, however, that my strength was undoubtedly failing me, for I must have lost a tremendous quantity of blood, and it had told upon me, added to the stupendous exertion I had been compelled to make in order to hold my own. In such moments as these, so long as the intellect is clear, thoughts flash through the brain with incredible rapidity, and I realised that my peril was extreme, and that I was truly face to face with death. All the details of the scene as I have described them must have been worked out in a space of time that was under ten minutes, though it seemed an hour or so to me; but I knew that in something like an hour from London the train was timed to stop, and as yet there was no diminution of speed.

So far I had managed to hold my own against the diabolical ruffians who had deliberately planned my assassination, but that I had done so was due to my suspicions having been so early aroused, which had caused me to be on the alert, and also to the fact that 'Bill' was a little, weak, delicate man, who single-handed would not have had the ghost of a chance against me, for nature had endowed me with a big frame and great muscular power. Then, again, the confined space of the compartment had told in my favour, while to the circumstance of the falling of the revolver I owed my life, for the big rascal who had tried to blow my brains out had not had an opportunity of recovering the weapon. Had he done so, there is no doubt he would have shot me. I knew, of course, that such an unequal struggle must end in favour of my antagonists. Any one to realise to the full what my feelings were must go through a similar

experience to that of mine on that fearful Christmas Eve.

Thoughts of those who were near and dear to me rushed through my brain, and I pictured how bitter and dark would be their Christmas Day when they learnt that I had been murdered in the train. These things racked me infinitely more than any personal fear. Indeed, I may conscientiously say that I had no fear, and yet the situation was awful enough.

For some moments the big ruffian was placed *hors de combat*, so that the struggle was between me and Bill, whom I was overpowering, but the big fellow recovered himself and began to rise. With a mighty effort I hurled Bill prostrate into the seat; then, springing to the door, I turned the handle, opened the door, and attempted to get out, but one of them caught me by the coat, and, slipping, I fell with my body half out of the open doorway. The train was rushing along at a fearful pace, and I so far had my presence of mind as to grip the footboard; but I knew perfectly well that my life hung now by a rotten thread, for it seemed absolutely impossible that any human being could fall from a train flying along at that pace and not be smashed to pieces. The ground was white with snow. I noted that, and I heard the grind and roar of the wheels as they beat the steel rails, and I saw the trees, and telegraph-posts, and hedgerows as they flew by; but, though I took in all these things, I nevertheless seemed dazed and bewildered. My legs were being held. I knew that because I could not free them, but what the object of the villains was in holding me I don't know, unless it was that they wished to make sure that I was dead before they hurled me on to the track.

It seemed to me at this time as if I was dreaming all these things. I have a perfect and distinct recollection of asking myself if I was not suffering from a sort of nightmare. As in dreams, so in the supreme moment when death stares us in the face, an immense amount is crowded into a brief space. The whole of my past life flashed, as it were, past my mental eyes; a thousand and one things were all remembered perfectly distinctly, but all sense of anxiety had left me, and mentally I began to get mixed up in my ideas; and gradually there stole upon me a delightful and absolutely ecstatic sensation of restfulness and repose. Memory was wiped out, and I fancied that I was flying through space. I no longer heard sounds. There was silence perfect and unbroken. A delicious, sweet, dreamy langour had taken possession of me. How long a time it took for me to experience the varying sensations I have so feebly described I could not accurately determine. No doubt it might be measured by seconds, but I only know that to me it appeared to be hours. After the idea once came to me that I was flying through space, I never once seemed to lose it until a deep voice sounded in my ear, saying, 'Do you feel better now?'

That voice broke the spell, and from bliss I suddenly passed to a condition of pain. Without being able to determine why, I was seized with an agony of strange anxiety, though in my mind there was no coherent thought, save it was that I was falling, falling, and this had the effect of causing me to open my eyes. At first all before me was a blurred mass, but gradually out of this mass human beings were evolved, and the first one to become quite distinct to my gaze was a white-capped, white-aproned woman with, as I

thought in the moment of transition from unconsciousness to consciousness, an angelic face. I am not sure but what I had a kind of vague, hazy notion that she was a veritable angel, and that I was really dead. Gradually, however, the awakening faculties were enabled to give to the surroundings their proper place and value, and then I realised that the white-capped woman was a hospital nurse, that a doctor was standing beside me with his fingers on my pulse, and that my head was enveloped in surgical bandages, and that the whole of my body was, as it were, a mass of pain. The doctor who was feeling my pulse said again in a pleasant, kindly voice—

‘Do you feel better now?’

I turned my eyes to him and saw a genial face, fringed with silver hair.

‘Yes,’ I answered, and I was conscious that it cost me an effort to utter that monosyllable. But, singularly enough, I had no recollection then of what had happened, and I asked—

‘What is the matter?’

‘You shall know in a little while. You had better drink this, and then go to sleep.’

A cup or glass was placed to my lips, and then ensued a blank. When I awoke it was Christmas afternoon. The brain had regained its normal functions, and all that I had passed through came back, and I remembered every detail up to the moment that I hung out of the doorway of the railway carriage. From that point I must fill in the story by the narrative of others. The driver of an up-goods train had observed me lying motionless in the six-foot way, for it appears that my body was very conspicuous owing to the snow that covered the

ground. At the next station he reported the circumstance, and as the spot where I was lying was not far off a party of men were sent down the line to look for me. I was picked up in a perfectly unconscious condition; in fact, they all believed then that I was dead. I was conveyed back to the station and seen by a local doctor, who pronounced my injuries serious, and as there was no hospital there he advised that I be sent on to Rugby by a goods train that passed in half an hour. This was done, and when I came to my senses it was in one of the wards of the Rugby Hospital. An analysis of the time proved that I must have been lying in the six-foot way fully an hour and a half before I was rescued; and had it not been for the snow the strong probabilities are that I should not have been seen at all until daylight, but by that time I should have been frozen to death. At first it was thought to be a case of suicide, although at the railway station where I was first taken to they ascertained immediately who I was by my letters, cards, and papers.

Of course I soon told the story of the outrage, and described my assailants as well as I could. But it appears that when the train by which I had travelled drew up at Rugby the broken window of the compartment attracted attention. The compartment was empty, but its condition told a terrible story. There was a bullet hole in the roof; the cushions and linings were torn and rent; and there seemed to be blood everywhere. All these things were suggestive of robbery and murder, and whoever had been in that compartment had probably got out when the train slackened speed as it came to Rugby. And so

Nemesis got on the track of my would-be murderers. Policemen were sent out to scour the country, and the telegraph flashed the news about, and the result was that before I recovered my senses the two ruffians had been captured. They were found concealed in a hut in a brickfield not far from the town. The big man was seriously injured in jumping from the train, for, as was subsequently elicited, I had broken some of his ribs, and he was weak and faint when he leapt, the consequence being that he fell heavily, breaking one arm and dislocating the other shoulder. Bill was more fortunate, but I had mauled his face, and it was pulpy, bruised, and swollen, and two of the fingers of his left hand were broken.

Both men were brought into Rugby in charge of the police and taken to the hospital, and Bill, as his hurts had been dressed, was transferred to the lock-up; but the big fellow, who turned out to be the brother of the rascal I had sent to penal servitude, was detained in the hospital, which he was destined never to leave alive, for three or four weeks later he was attacked by pneumonia, which had a fatal termination.

It was, as may well be imagined, a sad and bitter Christmas Day for me, and I felt verily as if I had come through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Although I had no bones broken, the wound in the head gave some trouble, added to the shock and exhaustion, and it was a fortnight before I was able to get about. The man who had been in custody in Liverpool had been set at liberty in the absence of evidence against him. But he had been carefully shadowed, and when I was ready he was once more pounced upon, and I was able to swear that he was

the man we had so long wanted. Bill, one of my assailants, turned out to be a notorious character, named William Straker, who had been twice convicted for felony; and, being put on trial for the outrage on myself, he was sent into penal servitude for life.

We were enabled to prove that he and his companion had resolved to kill me, and when they saw it announced in the papers that I was going down to Liverpool they considered that no better opportunity could offer. The plot was an artfully contrived one, but fate was against them, and in my favour. Their intention was to induce me to drink some drugged brandy, and then to hurl me out on to the track, so that it might be thought a case of suicide, or that I had fallen out while in a state of intoxication. But my refusal to drink the brandy rather nonplussed them, and through Straker showing his hand too soon I was warned in time. Nevertheless, I went through a terrible ordeal on that, to me, ever memorable Christmas Eve, and I think it will be readily admitted that I am guilty of no exaggeration in saying that I came verily face to face with death.

THE ABDUCTION.

THE oft-reiterated assertion that history repeats itself is exemplified every day of our lives; and a recent case of abduction that has caused considerable sensation throughout the country on account of the romantic features attending it, no less than for the very remarkable decision in the Law Courts, recalls to my mind one with which I had something to do years ago. It has generally been supposed by all sorts and conditions of people that a man, within reasonable limits, had full and absolute control over his wife. This idea, in fact, has been crystallised in the public mind, and up to a short time ago it is doubtful if any ordinary man or woman could have been found who would have dared to dispute so time-honoured a notion. However, we live in a world of change, and we are constantly being startled by new readings of old laws. One thing is perfectly obvious—the recent decision will, so to speak, revolutionise the relations of man and wife, and the woman who feels herself aggrieved by her husband may divorce herself from his bed and board with no more trouble than that occasioned by walking out of his house. This may be law, but it certainly is not common sense; indeed, it is an outrage on common sense, nor is it equity, because it is certain that if a man ventures to leave his wife in the same

way he will very soon be called upon, and that in a very peremptory fashion too, to contribute towards her support.

In the case which I am about to narrate it is perfectly certain that no such interpretation of the law was thought of, or my story would have had a different ending. The chief characters in the story are a Mr. Joshua Balgazetty and a lady whose maiden name was Lucy Arnold Finch. Mr. Balgazetty was a Belgian by birth, but for many years had been settled in Manchester, and was a naturalised Englishman, in some respects being more English than many natives of the soil. At any rate, he believed in the inviolability of the rights conferred upon a man by matrimony, and, as will presently be seen, he fought for those rights in a very plucky manner. He was a partner in an old-established Manchester firm, whose warehouse was in Moseley Street, not far from St. Peter's Church. Mr. Balgazetty, being a young man with ample means at his disposal, seems to have led a somewhat free and easy sort of life up to a certain period. Not that there was anything against his character; but he was fond of gaiety, and, as every one knows who has ever been there, if Manchester is a city of smoke and grime it is by no means lacking in those resources for distracting the mind from the humdrum cares of daily toil and duty. A man must be peculiarly constituted if he cannot find something to his tastes in Manchester. With theatres and music-halls it has always been well provided, while those whose likings are more æsthetic will find them gratified in every way.

In his bachelor days Mr. Balgazetty resided in luxurious quarters, with a sister, his brother, and mother in Higher Broughton, and he bore the reputa-

tion amongst his neighbours of being a man of unblemished respectability, although there were those who described him in vaguer terms as 'a man about town,' not that that must be taken as reflecting on his honour.

One night during the run of a pantomime at the Theatre Royal, under the late Mr. John Knowles' régime, Mr. Balgazetty made the acquaintance of Miss Lucy Arnold Finch. This young lady resided with her family at Bowdon, then one of the most rural and charmingly picturesque neighbourhoods of Manchester, but now vulgarised and ruined by the speculative builder, and country roads and quiet lanes have given place to streets and alleys of shops and houses. The Finches claimed to be a superior family of exceedingly good connections. The family consisted of Mrs. Finch, who was a widow, Lucy, a younger daughter, and two sons. Lucy, who was about five and twenty, was the eldest. Her father had been a Manchester merchant, and had been so successful all his life that he was enabled to leave a fortune to his family. On the night in question Mrs. Finch, with her two daughters and a lady friend, had driven in their carriage from Bowdon to witness the pantomime, and the coachman was instructed to be waiting at the chief entrance as soon as the performance was over to take them home again. In the course of the evening, however, it came on to snow heavily, and coachy, thinking that he might as well be comfortable while his people were enjoying themselves in the theatre, took the horse and carriage to a livery stable out of Peter Street, and then he adjourned to a hostelry, provided, as most Lancashire taverns are, with a cosy bar parlour. Here he fell in

with some cronies, and became so oblivious of time and his duties that he allowed himself to be overcome by various 'goes of something hot,' so that when the family wanted their carriage it was not forthcoming. I have detailed this little incident as showing upon what a slender thing a man and a woman's destiny sometimes hangs. For it was entirely through coachy's *laches* that Mr. Balgazetty and Miss Finch became acquainted. When the performance was over repeated calls for 'Finch's carriage' failed to produce any results, and the four ladies stood in the vestibule of the theatre, a pitiable picture of lovely women in distress. With knightly courtesy Mr. Balgazetty offered his services if he could be of any use, and under the peculiar circumstances Mrs. Finch was glad to avail herself of them. As the last train to Bowdon had departed there were only two alternatives—the one was to remain in town all night, or to procure a carriage to drive back to Bowdon. If they remained Mrs. Finch was afraid that the other members of her family would be in terrible distress of mind, thinking some accident had happened, and so she expressed an anxious desire to return if possible. Thereupon Mr. Balgazetty gallantly declared that if there was a carriage in Manchester to be had he would have it, and being well known at a livery stables in Strangeways he drove in a cab to that quarter, and was successful in getting a brougham and pair of horses, with a man, and he returned to the theatre, where the ladies had been allowed to wait. Of course, they were profuse in thanks to Mr. Balgazetty for having procured them means of returning to their home, and he received an invitation to call upon them. Equally, of course, Mr. Balgazetty availed himself of this per-

mission to go out to Bowdon the following day to inquire how the ladies were. He was cordially received, and, being struck with Miss Finch, it was not long before he paid a second visit, and after that he was frequently there.

The course of true love never did run smooth, and this case was no exception. Indeed, one may venture to doubt if on the lady's side there was true love at all. Or if there was it was destined soon to change. One thing is clear, the family did not approve of Mr. Balgazetty's attentions. As was subsequently to be revealed, Mrs. Finch considered that Balgazetty's social position was not good enough, and, being somewhat tainted with Puritanical ideas, she came to the conclusion that his conduct as a young man had not been ordered with that strict regard for the proprieties which she, from her point of view, considered imperative. At any rate, when Mr. Balgazetty made a formal proposal for the hand of Miss Lucy, her mother emphatically declined to accede to it, and preferred a request that Mr. Balgazetty would cease his visits. As to continue them in the face of the opposition of the head of the house was not expedient, he complied with the request, but as an ardent lover he was not to be thus deterred from making a bold attempt to win a bride. And as Miss Finch—at that time—was not averse to his addresses, a clandestine correspondence was carried on. The young lady, however, seems to have been much afraid of her mother, and, though she consented to her lover paying his addresses, she did not hold out any hope that his constancy would be requited. But he not only persevered, he brought a persuasive eloquence to bear that seems to have been irresistible, with the

result that Miss Finch consented to marry him secretly on the distinct understanding that he should leave her at the church door, and not seek to claim her as his wife until she had in the process of time broken the news to her mother, and reconciled the lady to the inevitable. These conditions were freely accepted by Balgazetty, whose ardency would have prompted him at that period to have committed himself to still sterner terms.

The marriage was duly solemnised at the Cathedral in a most unconventional way. There were no bridesmaids, no best man, nor anything of that kind, only two or three intimate friends of the bridegroom. As soon as the wedding ceremony was ended Balgazetty drove his wife in a cab to the Oxford Road Railway Station, where, having wished him good-bye for the time being, she took the train to Bowdon, and returned to her home as if nothing unusual had happened.

Of course there are superstitious people who will say that such a marriage, carried out in such a hole-and-corner way, could not fail to be productive of unhappiness. Putting aside altogether a belief in the undefinable, unhappiness was likely to ensue from the mere fact that the lady's friends and relatives would come to the conclusion that their feelings and authority had been set at naught, and, as a consequence, bitterness could not fail to be engendered.

A week or two after the marriage, Mr. Balgazetty, finding it a difficult matter to refrain from holding communication with his lawfully-wedded wife, decided, with her consent, to go abroad for a few months. His firm had an agency in Buenos Ayres, and thither he went. He was absent about fifteen

months. For some time he kept up a pretty regular correspondence with his wife; but at last she wrote and said it would be advisable to cease the correspondence for the time, and he consented to this.

On returning to Manchester he lost no time in communicating that fact to his wife, but she failed to make any response, and two or three other letters of his were productive of no better result. Astonished and alarmed, he went over to Bowdon, and succeeded in obtaining an interview with Mrs. Balgazetty, but to his amazement she declared that, though she was lawfully his wife, she felt that she could never be happy with him, and she had resolved never to live with him. During his absence she had either voluntarily told her mother of the marriage, or that lady had found it out. But, whichever way it was, Mrs. Finch and all the members of her family were strongly opposed to the union, and accused Balgazetty—most unjustly so, as was proved—of only being desirous of obtaining possession of his wife in order to get her fortune, which was very considerable, and they offered to settle several hundreds a year upon him on condition of his signing a bond whereby he would bind himself never to seek to claim his wife. With indignation and scorn he rejected this, and insisted on his wife coming to the home he had provided for her. He had taken a villa in Whalley Range, then a delightful suburb of Manchester, now much built upon, and had furnished it in a very handsome way, and he promised his wife that no reasonable wish of hers should remain unfulfilled. It was all unavailing, however. She was resolute, so great was the influence of her family over her.

Finding that persuasion had no effect, Mr. Bal

gazetty resolved to appeal to the law to recover that which the secular as well as the ecclesiastical law had given him, and he accordingly sued his wife for a restitution of conjugal rights, with the inevitable result then that the lady was ordered to go to her husband's home and fulfil her duties and obligations as his lawfully-wedded wife. As she failed to comply with this order of the Court—setting it at defiance, in fact—the injured husband resolved to carry her off, but found that she had disappeared, and not only did her relatives resolutely decline to say where she had gone to, but they taunted him with having been completely outwitted.

It was a singularly cruel position for a man to be placed in, for though he was married he had none of the comforts and privileges which are a husband's due. His house was solitary, and he was the butt for the caustic remarks of thoughtless and witless people. At this stage of the strange little drama Mr. Balgazetty applied to me to aid him to recover the fugitive wife, and as I was greatly interested in the case, I readily took it up, for I could not help thinking he had been very badly treated.

I found that the Finches were purse-proud people, and exceedingly selfish to boot. So far as I could learn from carefully-couched inquiries, they had no definite or distinct charge to make against Mr. Balgazetty beyond that he had been guilty of gross deceit in marrying Miss Finch secretly; and as at that time she did not know her own mind, and had been misled by his persuasive arguments, he had no right to attempt to force her to live with him. My view of the case was exactly the reverse of this, and I was very decidedly of opinion that having gone

through the marriage ceremony the lady was not entitled to change her mind and say, without any sufficient cause, that 'though you are my husband I won't live with you.' I therefore set to work to find out where Mrs. Balgazetty had gone to.

At the very outset of my inquiries I was met with difficulties of no ordinary kind, for I soon learned that every member of the family was resolutely opposed to the wife going to her husband, and her whereabouts was kept a profound secret, none of the servants being allowed to know it. But the difficulties only served to put me on my mettle, and having a thorough belief in the righteousness of the husband's cause, and of the cruelty of the course pursued by the Finches, I threw myself into the business with enthusiasm, and was determined to find out the wife's hiding place. For some considerable time, however, I was completely baffled, so jealously was the secret guarded. But at length I discovered that at every week's end some member of the family went away, and this aroused my suspicions, and one Saturday morning I got on the track of the eldest son, and followed him to Blackpool. On his arrival he took a cab and drove to a large old-fashioned house, situated close to the sea, and some short distance out of the town. On that house I set a watch, and found that the long-sought-for Mrs. Balgazetty was staying there. I was enabled to identify the lady from her photograph, which her husband had supplied me with. She had somewhat altered, but still I had no difficulty in recognising her; and I learned that she was passing under the name of Miss Fanny Heatcote, from Liverpool, and was supposed to be staying there for the benefit of

her health. It seemed a foolish piece of deception to practise, for it could not be kept up indefinitely, and of course it necessitated a great deal of useless falsehood. What her views and the views of her family were it is difficult to say; but probably they thought that Mr. Balgazetty's patience would soon be worn out, and he would, no doubt, leave the country. But if that was really their idea they were doomed to be woefully disappointed.

I lost no time in hurrying back to the husband with the news of my discovery, and he at once expressed his determination to carry her forcibly to his house, for he felt sure that it would be useless to try persuasion with her, for if it failed she would be at once removed, and more care taken to guard her whereabouts for the future.

As a preliminary to the carrying out of the little plot, I spent several days at Blackpool in order that I might learn something about the lady's habits, and I found that every afternoon she promenaded pretty regularly at the seashore, and frequently in the morning came into the town of Blackpool. Our plans were made accordingly, and Mr. Balgazetty enlisted the services of his brother and two gentlemen friends. Our idea was that we might carry the lady off, but some perverse fortune prevented our meeting her as we had hoped, and so I suggested a subterfuge, which was that a telegram should be sent from Manchester couched in the following terms:—

‘Mother has been taken very poorly, and though her illness is not serious she would like you to come home. You may do so with safety. Leave by the seven o'clock train this evening, and I will meet you at Victoria Station. ROBERT.’

Robert was the name of one of her brothers, and I had no doubt the effect of the telegram would be to bring Mrs. Balgazetty to Manchester by the train indicated. That particular train had been chosen because by the time it reached Manchester darkness would have set in; and of course we wished as much as possible to avoid anything like a scene on the platform. Confidently anticipating the lady's arrival, her husband and his friends had a brougham in waiting at Victoria, and while the others kept in the background, Mr. Balgazetty was on the lookout, and when the train arrived the lady was seen, very much to our delight at the success of the ruse, to put her head out of the window of a first-class compartment, expecting, of course, to see her brother on the platform. When the train came to a standstill she opened the door and alighted, glancing anxiously up and down, and, failing to find the person she expected to see, she went to the luggage-van to claim a box she had. At that moment the driver of the brougham, who had been taken into his master's secret, stepped up to her and said, 'Beg your pardon, Miss, but are you Miss Fanny Heathcote from Blackpool?'

She seemed a little startled and surprised, and, after some hesitation, answered—

'Yes, but who has sent you?'

'Oh, it's all right, miss,' replied the man with the air of one who was not playing a part, 'here's a carriage waiting for you.' With that he lifted her box and bore it away.

She followed him for a few yards when some mis-giving seemed to take possession of her, and she called to him to stop; but as he did not heed her, she turned back to the platform in an anxious, nervous

way, as if with an idea of seeking assistance. But by this time the platform was pretty well deserted, and at that moment her husband stepped up to her. His appearance was, of course, a revelation, and, starting back, she uttered a little cry.

‘Lucy,’ he said in a kindly tone, ‘I am your lawful husband, and it is your duty to accompany me to your home.’

Recognising, no doubt, that she had been trapped, she turned flurried and excited towards a railway guard who was standing a few yards off, and seemed as if she was going to appeal to him, when her husband took her arm and attempted to lead her away, but with another cry she wrenched herself free; and as the attention of those about was beginning to be attracted, Mr. Balgazetty seized her in his arms, and, in spite of her cries, bore her rapidly to the carriage where his brother and friends were waiting. She struggled and tried to prevent his putting her into the vehicle, and had he been without assistance she would, probably, have succeeded, for he was not a powerful man. As it was, she was thrust into the carriage with no more force than was absolutely necessary, and then the brougham was rapidly driven away to Whalley Range.

Mr. Balgazetty’s house was an isolated one, not very far from what was then known as ‘Mee’s Farm,’ and commanding a view of the Greenhay’s Fields. During the journey the lady became very hysterical, and on arriving at her destination she struggled so much that she was only got out of the carriage with great difficulty. Her husband treated her with every possible kindness and consideration, but she vowed that she would not remain with him, and the follow-

ing day she succeeded, by means of a considerable bribe, in getting one of the servants to take a letter to the post. That letter was to her mother, and within a very short time it brought the lady's brother and a number of their friends to the house with the intention of recovering her and carrying her off. Mr. Balgazetty, however, had fully prepared himself for this contingency by laying in a stock of provisions, and he declared himself ready to stand a siege of any duration. The wife's friends, being greatly incensed at this unexpected opposition, enlisted a number of roughs in their service, or perhaps, to be more charitable, I will suppose that some of the numerous loafers who are to be found in every community, and who, scenting plunder in the air, tacked themselves on to the besiegers, and stormed the house with sticks and stones, with the result that almost every pane of glass was demolished, but an entrance was not effected, and the besieged retaliated by drenching the mob with water by means of large garden squirts and buckets. This, instead of cooling the ardour of the rabble, incensed them more, and a very violent attempt was made to obtain entrance into the premises. But, owing to the means that had been taken to guard against anything of the kind, the attempt was a failure. For several days, however, the neighbourhood was kept in a state of intense excitement, and had it not been for the efforts of the police there is little doubt that the roughs would have demolished the building. Of course, during this time the inmates of the house—which, besides Mrs. Balgazetty, her husband, his brother, and friends, numbered several domestics, and two large Newfoundland dogs—were kept close prisoners, with the exception that they had access to the stableyard at

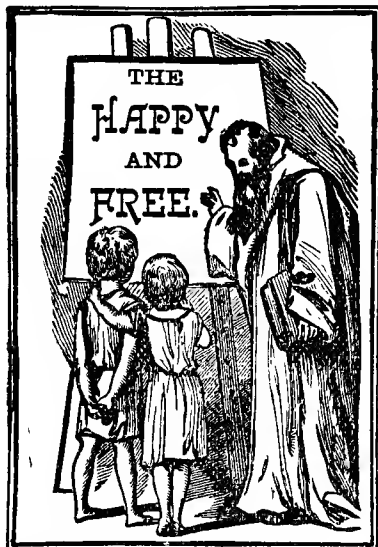
the back of the house, and so were enabled to attend to the horses. The lady's friends had enlisted in their service a number of men who were charged to watch the premises night and day in the hope that the garrison would be starved out, and possession of the lady thus obtained. It seems almost incredible that the Finches should have displayed so much determination and obstinacy in a case in which the law was decidedly against them, for the lady herself had actually set at defiance the order of the Court for a restitution of conjugal rights. It never occurred to any one, then, to carry the matter to a superior Court, and charge the husband with breaking the law by abducting his own wife; but I have no hesitation whatever in saying that had this course been pursued a verdict in favour of the husband would have been given. Public sympathy was decidedly in his favour in spite of the demonstrations made against him by the rough element. The affair, however, ended in a way that the Finches hardly deemed possible. About a week after the abduction a policeman brought me a letter. It had been conveyed to him to give to me by one of the servants, and the writer was Mr. Balgazetty. The purpose of it was to ask me to have a cab waiting, at an hour and on a date mentioned, at a certain spot, and to endeavour to draw off the attention of the watchers long enough to enable the husband and wife to escape. The hour chosen was midnight. I was fortunately able to succeed so well that Mr. and Mrs. Balgazetty passed out through the stableyard, crossed a field, and succeeded in reaching Moss Lane, where a cab was in waiting, and they at once drove to an hotel near the Exchange, and early the following morning proceeded to Liverpool.

It appears that during the week the lady was detained as a prisoner in her husband's house, her feelings underwent an entire change, and she became thoroughly reconciled to him, and promised to go wherever he liked, and the little stratagem I have mentioned was resorted to to get her away. The disgust and chagrin of her relatives when they found she had gone may be imagined, for they had not counted upon her yielding, and it completely non-plussed them, so they had nothing for it but to submit with what grace they could. The husband by a bold stroke had got possession of his wife, and her good sense enabled her to yield to the force of circumstances. I understand that her mother and her other relatives never forgave her. When Mrs. Finch was on her death-bed, in spite of her daughter's entreaties, she refused to see her. Such obdurateness could only have been the result of wounded vanity and stupid prejudice.

Mrs. Balgazetty's married life was not a very happy one, though she had one of the best of husbands. But she was of an unsociable, taciturn disposition, inclining to melancholy, and five years after that eventful night when her husband abducted her she followed her mother to the grave, leaving her husband with three young children. By a cruel stroke of fate he did not long survive her, for one day while hunting with the North Cheshire hounds he was thrown from his horse, and so severely injured that, though he lingered for some months, the accident resulted in his death.

THE END.

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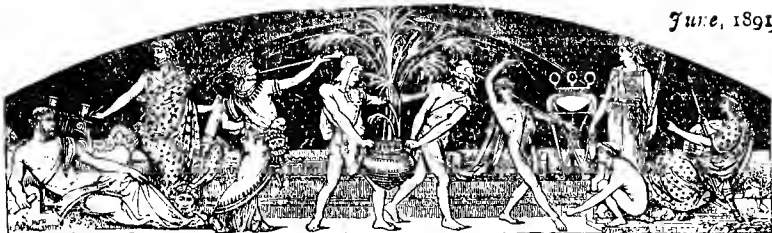
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Its purity is such that it may be used with perfect confidence upon the tenderest and most sensitive skin—

even that of a New Born Babe.”

